



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

**2021** Addressing Local Needs,  
Solving Global Challenges

Franklin, Jackson, Perry, Randolph, and Williamson Counties





Lynn Heins  
County Director

## Message from the Director

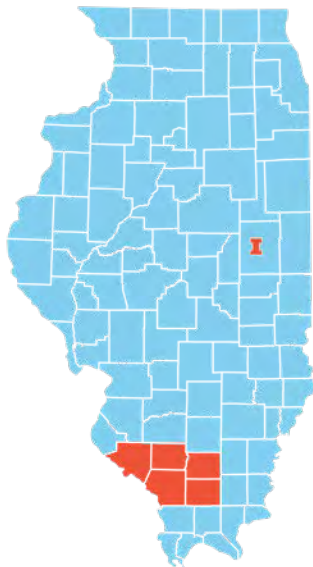
University of Illinois Extension plays a vital role in building a strong community by providing services that help solve problems, develop skills, and create a better future for local residents and youth. From reliable information to help families stay healthy in body and spirit, Illinois Extension remains a trusted source to address the most pressing issues in the state of Illinois relating to food, health, environment, community, and economy.

We appreciate the collaborative partnerships with local organizations that help elevate Illinois Extension programming and events throughout the community. We are also grateful

for strong local support from county boards, 4-H and Extension foundations, home and community education associations, county farm bureaus, townships, and individual and business contributions. Additional sources of important revenue are provided through federal, state, and other grant funds. We are pleased to share this brief impact report highlighting Extension's work within the Franklin-Jackson-Perry-Randolph-Williamson County Unit. Thank you for your continued support!

Lynn Heins  
County Director

# Serving Franklin, Jackson, Perry, Randolph, and Williamson Counties



## STAFF

Lynn Heins  
County Director

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4-H Program Coordinator

Talon Becker  
Commercial Agriculture  
Educator

Katie Bell  
Local Foods and Small Farms  
Educator

Misty Bernhard  
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

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Educator

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4-H Program Coordinator

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4-H Program Coordinator

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SNAP-Ed/EXCITE  
Program Coordinator

Maggie Ray  
Local Foods and Small Farms  
Program Coordinator

Robin Ridgley  
Family Life Educator

Rhonda Shubert  
4-H Program Coordinator

Heather Willis  
Marketing & Communications  
Program Coordinator

Toni Kay Wright  
SNAP-Ed Educator

# 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

Illinois  
Communities  
Served

335

Educational  
Sessions Per Week

84

Online Courses

### Partnerships Supported

6,445

Adult  
Volunteers

278

Community  
Gardens

1,000

School Partnerships

### Learners Engaged

8,000,000

Website Users

14,450

Online  
Course Users

500,000

Educational Program  
Attendees

### Resources Generated

\$14,000,000

Value of Volunteer  
Contributions

\$242,000

Value of Donated  
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.





## Hybrid program provides insight into stormwater management

The threat of flooding and standing water is a concern for homeowners and community leaders. Contaminated runoff can also make its way into lakes, rivers, and streams. Rain gardens installed on private property or in small-scale public areas can address both problems. Native plants with deep roots make them a practical landscape feature designed to soak up excess stormwater runoff from buildings, roads, and driveways. Understanding how rain gardens function as well as how to design, install, and maintain rain gardens was the focus of a rainscaping program hosted by the Greater Egypt Regional Planning & Development Commission and University of Illinois Extension in partnership with Purdue Extension and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant. During the hybrid program, participants learned from experts during virtual sessions. At the conclusion of the training, participants were invited to bring garden tools and gloves and get hands-on experience with the rain garden at the Jackson County Extension office.



Participants get hands-on experience in the rain garden following the rainscaping program.

## Master Gardeners help establish arboretum at DuQuoin State Fairgrounds



The survival of our planet depends on the quality of our water, land, and air. These shared resources must be managed through sustainable practices that support ecological balance. We must take steps now to effectively steward these resources for generations to come. In an effort to enhance the natural resources in southern Illinois, University of Illinois Extension partnered with multiple Soil & Water Conservation Districts throughout the region to establish an arboretum at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds. Soil & Water Districts from Jackson, Franklin, Perry, Randolph, Washington, and Williamson counties donated money to purchase 30 new trees. With the help of local Master Gardeners and the fairgrounds crew, several varieties of oak, pecan, hickory nut, persimmon, and hazel nut trees were planted on the grounds. Through the Tree Legacy Projects, the groups will continue to grow the arboretum by planting additional trees each year for the enjoyment of generations to come.



Local volunteers work together to plant trees to establish an arboretum at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds.



Learn more about the Master Gardener program  
[extension.illinois.edu/mg](https://extension.illinois.edu/mg)





## EXTENSION SUPPORTS VACCINE CONFIDENCE IN RURAL REGIONS

People of all ages need trusted and reliable research-based information to make health decisions that improve their quality of life. Through the Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching & Engagement (EXCITE) initiative, staff deliver immunization education in an effort to reduce vaccination hesitancy with adult immunizations like the flu, shingles, tetanus, and COVID-19. Local agencies that band together can help remove barriers that prevent eligible people from being immunized. During the spring, the Jackson County Extension office served as a mobile vaccination site to meet people where they are to receive the vaccine. Through the one-day event, 480 vaccines were administered to Illinois residents. The mass effort was made possible through cooperative partnerships among the Region 5 Hospital Coordinating Center, Jackson County Health Department, and the Army National Guard.



The EXCITE initiative is working to reduce vaccine hesitancy in southern Illinois and southern Indiana.



## ILLINOIS STRONG COUPLES PROGRAM STRENGTHS RELATIONSHIPS

Maintaining a strong relationship with a spouse or romantic partner can be a challenge. Family studies researchers at the University of Illinois, in partnership with University of Illinois Extension, are addressing this issue through Illinois Strong Couples, an online program for Illinois couples seeking help for their relationship. The self-paced, six-session program is entirely online and uses the scientifically-proven ePREP platform. The program is free to qualifying Illinois couples and includes support from trained program coaches affiliated with University of Illinois Extension. Local Family Life Educator Robin Ridgley serves as one of the program facilitators and has received positive feedback from the many couples she has coached. The program strives to create greater intimacy and connection among couples as they learn to communicate more effectively with their partners.



## FOOD SECURITY SUMMIT ADDRESSES HUNGER IN OUR REGION

With more than 45,000 southern Illinoisans relying on local food pantries for nourishment, Illinois Extension is addressing food insecurity within our region. Through a partnership with local organizations, the inaugural Southern Illinois Food Security Summit was held in Marion. Vince Hall, vice president for external affairs at Feeding America, served as the keynote speaker. The event increased communication and collaboration among local organizations that work to address food insecurity in the lower 16 counties. The day before the summit, many food access community partners had the opportunity to tour the new Tri-State Food Pantry cold storage unit in Vienna. The 3,600 square-foot facility houses fresh fruits and vegetables for many local food pantries and soup kitchens. This additional storage facility in the heart of southern Illinois will expand food access for the region.



Vince Hall, Vice President for External Affairs at Feeding America, speaks to participants at the Southern Illinois Food Summit.



During Mission Nutrition, participants to hit the mark as they learned about healthy eating on a budget, food labeling, and mindful eating.

## EXTENSION HELPS BUILD HEALTHY COMMUNITIES DURING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Personal health decisions are not made in a vacuum. We must create environments where healthy choices are not only possible but are also encouraged. Classrooms, school cafeterias, food pantries, workplaces, and other environments play an important role in promoting health and safety. Through a grant-sponsored partnership with the Randolph County Farm Bureau and collaboration with Sparta Community Hospital, a two-part series was presented to local residents in Sparta and Marissa to make healthy choices for their families. Mission Nutrition allowed participants to hit the mark as they learned about healthy eating on a budget, food labeling, and mindful eating. The multi-disciplined initiative featured segments from unit educators on topics like creating container gardens to grow healthy foods and activating all of our senses to nourish our bodies through mindful eating.







## Donation Garden provides produce to area food pantries

Research shows a strong link between food insecurity, poor health, and even poor academic outcomes for children. Food insecurity is not just about hunger. It's about not having access to food options that meet nutritional needs, which is particularly important for individuals and families with limited resources. Extension's network of volunteers and partners work together to address food insecurity in locally relevant ways.

We're thrilled to see this garden become a reality. Having fresh, seasonal produce for our clients' overall health is a great benefit.  
CAMI HORN,  
SALVATION ARMY OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

The Cultivating Care Donation Garden in Marion is one example of how Extension works with area partners to reduce hunger and provide residents with access to fresh, healthy produce. The newly established garden was made possible through a grant from Growing Together Illinois, a multi-disciplinary special project focused on increasing access to fruits and vegetables in identified Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) networks to help food insecure-families.

The project encompassed all areas of Extension with the Agriculture and Natural Resources team leading the way to build and sustain the vegetable garden, area Master Gardeners and 4-H members volunteering with garden maintenance and upkeep, and SNAP-Ed staff collecting and delivering harvested produce to the Salvation Army food pantry. Local staff shared their vision of food access when they showcased the garden to University of Illinois President Killeen and Chancellor Jones during a fall visit to southern Illinois. Educators and community partners shared their experience on this multi-disciplined approach to address a core mission of Extension by growing and sharing locally produced food with those in need.



21  
Varieties of Vegetables



127  
Volunteer Hours



358  
Pounds of donated produce



[go.illinois.edu/cultivatingcaredonationgarden](https://go.illinois.edu/cultivatingcaredonationgarden)



Local volunteers work together to plant vegetable in the donation garden.





## Cold food storage expanded in local food pantries

According to Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH), 80% of adults in southern Illinois are not meeting the recommended guidelines for daily fruit and vegetable intake. In 2021, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, Illinois Public Health Institute, and Aetna Better Health of Illinois partnered with the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network to provide \$178,000 worth of professional-grade refrigerators and freezers to 36 food pantries serving the southernmost 16 counties in Illinois. During the summer months, many food pantries receive an influx of fresh fruits and vegetables. Previously, local pantries had to turn perishable donations away due to limited space or the inability to store these types of foods.

The cold storage is a welcome addition, allowing pantries to source more perishable and healthy items to distribute in addition to their traditional shelf-stable, non-perishable items. SNAP-Ed Extension Educator Toni Kay Wright provides backbone support for the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network. The network helps reduce hunger and improve the health and wellbeing of local communities through access to healthy and nutritious food, education, resources, and advocacy. By allocating donations from partnering organizations, they help transform the lives of residents who face food insecurity in Southern Illinois communities.

The cold storage gives us the advantage to keep the produce at its peak freshness for our clients.

ASHLEY GREER,  
WESTERN EGYPTIAN FOOD PANTRY



Ashley Greer adds fresh produce to a new cooler at the Western Egyptian Food Pantry in DuQuoin.



## 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



6,592

Total Estimated Reach



244

Number of Nutrition Education Classes Provided

#### TYPE OF CLASSES

- 77% Face-to-face
- 9% Virtual or online
- 14% Mix of face-to-face and virtual

SNAP-Ed worked with community partners in the Carbondale area to write and submit for a No Kid Hungry - Early Childhood food security grant. The application was funded for \$25,000 to provide monthly weekend meal kits for Head Start families in September, October, November, and December 2021. In the first month of operation, 256 families received the meals kits.

### SNAP-Education Community Partnerships



10

K-12 Schools



10

Early Childhood



17

Other Agencies or Community Centers



11

Food Banks and Food Pantries





## Extension provides best management practices at field day

From the beginning, the Ewing Demonstration Center was a place where area farmers and agricultural professionals could work with University researchers to develop and implement research that would benefit the local farming community. The center, which has been around for over 100 years, continued the tradition of in-person field days during a July program. Educators and campus faculty were on site at the research grounds to answer questions and provide best management practices for local growers. Over 60 participants were in attendance to learn more from experts in soil health, cover crops, phosphorus management, and field crop insects.

Ewing Demonstration Center has served the agricultural community of southern Illinois since 1910. Research at the center includes various trials for corn, soybeans, sorghum/milo, wheat, and cover crops. The center has featured no-till research and demonstration plots for more than 50 years as it offers representative growing conditions for southern Illinois.



[go.illinois.edu/EwingDemonstrationCenter](https://go.illinois.edu/EwingDemonstrationCenter)

## Jackson County grounds and high tunnel showcase research projects



Whether it is commercial agriculture operations, small farms, or community and backyard gardens, the future of our food supply relies on the use of practices that boost production and capacity. Growers at all levels benefit from effective, efficient, and sustainable approaches to cultivate produce, crops, and livestock that feed their families, communities, and the world.

During the past year, the Jackson County grounds and high tunnel showcased several research and demonstration projects where valuable data was collected and used as teaching tools to provide best management practices for local growers. Over 50 participants from the community, local schools, and universities stopped by to learn about the tomato fertilization trial, production systems for specialty crops, and view the demonstration garden featuring cut flowers and gourds. Over 955 pounds of marketable fruit from the five acres of production grounds was harvested and donated to local food pantries and community members.



A demonstration garden filled with cut flowers and gourds was in full bloom during the summer Jackson County grounds and high tunnel tour.





## Twilight meetings focus on southern Illinois farming enterprises

During warm summer evenings, you'll find our Local Foods team hosting events to highlight and demonstrate diverse farming enterprises across southern Illinois. Over the past seven years, the team has partnered with area farms to provide evening twilight meetings to allow participants to experience different types of production and marketing practices utilized by southern Illinois producers.

In 2021, growers and Extension educators shared information on plasticulture strawberry production, insect pests in high tunnel production and management strategies with natural predators, high tunnel vegetable production, no-till tomato and pepper production, regenerative grazing techniques in cattle production, and utilizing roadside stands to direct-market products. By meeting on working farms, local growers get hands-on learning experience and a chance to network with one another, which is an important step in forming relationships with other local enterprises. This opportunity helps to increase business for both parties, grow the capacity of our local foods and small farms, and support a stronger, more sustainable, regional economy.

Great information! As a result of the plasticulture strawberries program, I plan to consider growing as a rotation in my operation.  
PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



Extension Educator Bronwyn Aly (left) and Specialty Crops Entomologist Kacie Athey (right) are working on a research project that focuses on predatory insects as biological control within high tunnels.



[extension.illinois.edu/fjprw/local-foods-small-farms](https://extension.illinois.edu/fjprw/local-foods-small-farms)



### Rooted in community. Growing through connection.

County Extension offices now have the support of two new program areas — **Agriculture and Agribusiness** and **Natural Resources, Environment, and Energy** — to strengthen the economic viability and environmental sustainability of Illinois agriculture, natural resources, and community natural assets.



19

Master Gardener  
Volunteers



40

Master Naturalist  
Volunteers



3,382

Hours Donated



\$99,322

Volunteer Value



5

Community gardens



549

Pounds of food  
donated



1,063

Expert consultations and  
volunteer information services

### Access to Statewide Programs



262

Webinar Sessions



282

New videos and  
Podcast Episodes

#### Webinar series and online resources include:

- Master Gardener online training
- Four Seasons gardening webinars
- Small Farms webinar series
- Everyday Environment webinars
- Pesticide Safety Education program
- Certified Livestock Manager training
- Cropflix online CCA education
- Good Growing podcast and blog
- Nutrient Loss Reduction podcast
- farmdoc webinars and farmdoc daily posts
- Teacher resources on pollution prevention, weather & climate, and water quality



Find webinars

<https://go.illinois.edu/AAB-NREE>





## BLESSING BOXES OFFER FOOD AND SUPPLIES FOR THOSE IN NEED

Many Illinois residents struggle with hunger, but newly created blessing boxes will help address food access in our community. *The Southern Illinoisan* donated several newspaper displays stands to 4-H programs in Franklin, Perry, Randolph, and Williamson counties to repurpose into blessing boxes. The project will follow the philosophy “take what you need, leave what you can,” as boxes are filled with donated non-perishable food items, hygiene products, and household items that are in need throughout the community. Local 4-H members worked to decorate, clean, and stock each box with the items of greatest need. The Randolph County blessing box is located in the Sparta Police Department, the Perry County blessing box is at the Pinckneyville Community Center, and the Williamson County box is at the Boys and Girls Club. Additional boxes will soon be available in Whittington and Ewing.



Randolph County 4-H members decorate and stocked a blessing box during a summer 4-H workshop.



Extension and 4-H staff greet students and families at the back-to-school event.

## EXTENSION HELPS LOCAL YOUTH GEAR UP FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

Getting youth prepared for the return of school can be costly, and it can take a lot of time to get appointments for all of the immunizations, physicals, and exams required for school. Illinois Extension was one of the many partners that helped youth gear up for the school year with the summer back-to-school event. It was a great opportunity to bring many essential resources under one roof to give kids the best start. The event featured lots of free giveaways to help relieve the financial burden many parents experience when sending their children back to school. Participants were given free backpacks filled with school supplies. Vouchers were distributed to purchase donated clothing or enjoy a meal from a local food truck. Free physicals, dental exams, and haircuts were also available throughout the event. Over 800 participants stopped by to prepare for the upcoming school year.



## SHOOTING SPORTS PROGRAM RECEIVES GRANT FOR NEW EQUIPMENT

Thanks to a grant from the National Rifle Association Foundation, Williamson County 4-H shooting sports expanded their air rifle and pistol programs with new equipment. The funds gave youth the opportunity to safely learn about shooting sports with quality materials. Without the support of this grant, participants would have to pay a supply fee to utilize the equipment. Through this gift, Extension can reduce barriers to youth learning about the sport through hands-on experience. Through the 4-H shooting sports program, youth learn marksmanship, the safe and responsible use of firearms, principles of hunting, and much more. 4-H shooting sports clubs are founded on the principles of positive youth development. The program’s activities and the support of caring adult leaders provide young people with opportunities to develop life skills, self-worth, and conservation ethics.



Williamson County 4-H expands air rifle program thanks to a recent equipment grant.



Local 4-H members work with 4-H staff and Master Gardeners to install QR codes on trees in Keyes Park.

## 4-H YOUTH AND MASTER GARDENERS COLLABORATE ON TREE TAGGING PROJECT

Master Gardeners help others “learn to grow,” and 4-H members “learn by doing.” These themes came together perfectly during a collaborative project when QR codes were installed on fourteen local trees in DuQuoin Keyes Park. The park is home to several different species of trees common to our region, and they represent a good mix of the many trees that flourish in southern Illinois. In 2020, local Master Gardeners led a virtual tour of the trees during the Eyes on Keyes’ Trees video series. With the helping hands of 4-H members, the second part of the project came to fruition during the tree tagging workshop this past summer. The QR codes allow local participants to scan to learn more about each tree. The code also links to the videos, which include more information on each tree’s growth habits, characteristics, soil preferences, longevity, and potential problems and pests.





# 4-H is Growing True Leaders

4-H youth programs are empowering and preparing Illinois youth for success both now and in the future.



Madalynn and Maylee Adams showcase the grand champion lamb wether at the Franklin County 4-H fair.



131,628  
Youth Affiliations



6,192  
Adult Volunteers



1,597  
Clubs



47,556  
Fair Exhibits



2,159  
Programs



2,257  
Youth in Leadership Projects & Programs

## Opportunity4All

Advancing the mission for all youth in Illinois to be empowered and prepared for success.



24%  
Minority Members



12%  
Hispanic Members



788  
Virtual Programs



142  
New Program Sites



## 4-H youth return to lives shows in 2021

Following the 2020 summer of virtual livestock exhibits, participants were anxious for the return of in-person shows. By working in partnership with the local public health department and other organizations in our communities, youth were able to participate in one of the hallmark experiences of being a 4-H member – 4-H exhibitions and shows. Hard work, quality care, and dedication paid off as our 4-H members showcased their animals and displayed projects during the past year's 4-H fairs. During general shows, creativity and skills were on full display as youth were judged in areas such as visual arts, photography, food and nutrition, floriculture, and much more.

The fairs provided an opportunity for youth to display sportsmanship and exude confidence as they showed the “best of the best” during the livestock and animal shows. 4-H youth who raise beef, swine, sheep, goats, rabbits, and poultry for their annual projects had the opportunity to participate in the livestock auction. Participants receive the full proceeds from the sale of their livestock, and this was a record-breaking year. Local businesses, families, and other individuals made this year's auction a success, with proceeds going directly to local youth. The fair provides an opportunity for youth to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout their time in 4-H by displaying their projects. 4-H members that received state delegation had the opportunity to display their projects at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield.



[extension.illinois.edu/fjprw/4-h-youth-development](https://extension.illinois.edu/fjprw/4-h-youth-development)





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## OFFICE INFORMATION

### Franklin County

1212 Route 14 West  
Benton, IL 62812  
Phone: 618-439-3178  
Fax: 618-439-2953  
Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Jackson County

402 Ava Rd.  
Murphysboro, IL 62966  
Phone: 618-687-1727  
FAX: 618-687-1612  
Monday - Friday  
8 am to 4:30 pm (Closed 12 - 1pm)

### Perry County

203 N Walnut, Suite A  
Pinckneyville, IL 62274  
Phone: 618-357-2126  
Fax: 618-357-3934  
Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Randolph County

1403 N Hillcrest Dr  
Sparta, IL 62286  
Phone: 618-443-4364  
Fax: 618-357-3934  
Monday - Thursday  
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Williamson County

101-B East DeYoung  
Marion, IL 62959  
Phone: 618-993-3304  
Fax: 618-997-1542  
Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

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## ONLINE



[facebook.com/UIExtensionFJPRW](https://facebook.com/UIExtensionFJPRW)



[instagram.com/uofiextensionfjprw](https://instagram.com/uofiextensionfjprw)



[youtube.com/c/UniversityofIllinoisExtensionFJPRW](https://youtube.com/c/UniversityofIllinoisExtensionFJPRW)



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# 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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