As we wrap up a successful year of programs, I want to share how grateful we are to our audiences, stakeholders, and volunteers. The impact Extension makes in all communities is nothing without the support of all of you. 2023 will bring a year full of genuine, intentional, and purposeful programming, research, and networking. Our goals for the new year include filling internal vacancies and expanding and elevating programming.

Thank you to those who attended the Open Houses earlier this month. It was such a pleasure to meet and converse with such passionate people. I look forward to visiting your community gardens, programs, and meetings.

Happy Holidays! Please be safe and enjoy those around you.

Best,

Laquitsha Bejoile-Hayes, MPH
Madison County

NATIONAL 4-H WEEK PROCLAMATION

Madison County Board Chairman, Kurt Prenzler, presented and signed a proclamation declaring National 4-H Week in Madison County. Three 4-H youths, Amelia Reding, Allison Reding, and Joseph Hellon, attended and shared their 4-H story with the Board. We are very thankful for the support that the Madison County Board provides!

MADISON COUNTY GARDEN CLUB OF ILLINOIS AWARD RECIPIENTS

St. Clair County

NATIONAL 4-H WEEK PROCLAMATION

St. Clair County Board Chairman, Mark Kern, presented and signed a proclamation declaring National 4-H Week in St. Clair County. 4-H Youth Development Educator Emily Reece, attended and shared her appreciation for the support from the St. Clair County Board.

WELCOME NEW 4-H CLUBS

EMERALD CLOVERS

Emerald Mound Grange
Lebanon, IL
Leaders: Natalie Ruth & Ashlee Schwaegel

ATKINS’ ACRES CLOVERBUDS

Atkins Acres Educational Farm
Millstadt, IL
Leaders: Kim & Mark Atkins
St. Clair County

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

From September to December 2022, Extension led 64 agricultural education sessions at the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Center with 146 youth, 7 to 13 years old. Seven to ten-year-olds learned more about the six parts of plants and their function. 11-13 year-olds learned math, customer service, and entrepreneurship by selling produce at the farmer’s market stand.

JACKIE JOYNER KERSEE FARMERS MARKET STAND

Middle schoolers do not quickly get excited about getting dirty in the garden, but they are more than willing to do a fruit, vegetable, or bee suit to sell JJK-grown produce. In July 2022, the middle school youth began selling homegrown fruits and vegetables through the JJK Farmer’s Market stand.

Preventative Health and Health Education Services has a long-standing history of being the Wellness outlet in East St. Louis. One of their many gems is their F.R.E.S.H Community Teaching Garden, run by Elizabeth Patton-Whiteside, Eastside Health District Administrator and Local Master Gardener. The Community Teaching garden has increased food access by offering hundreds of pounds annually to the F.R.E.S.H. Farmer’s Market and local food pantries and providing green space for city residents. For Extension Educator Grace Margherio, it was a no-brainer to partner with the local farmer’s market to teach JJK youth about entrepreneurship, leadership skills, and food production. After hosting a few farmer’s markets stands at the F.R.E.S.H market, youth were ready to relocate their stand to the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Center.

In August, they tried two days of marketing in front of JJK. This move significantly increased profits, community engagement, and youth participation. The farmer’s market stand has continued in front of JJK, engaging more students, staff, and families with awareness of the JJK garden, Extension recipes, and upcoming JJK Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition Innovation Center programs each week.

ON THE HORIZON

The JJK Farmer’s Market will continue from 4:00-5:30 PM on Wednesdays starting January 18, 2023 at the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Center.
Monroe County

4-H SCIENCE CLUBS
4-H Science Clubs at Waterloo Jr. High and Valmeyer School resumed in October. These clubs are open to youth in grades 6-8 as a learning opportunity to engage in fun STEM educational activities every month. Activities thus far have included EcoBots, Pumpkin Catapults, and Circuit Holiday Cards.

NATIONAL 4-H WEEK
We kicked off National 4-H Week on October 3 at the Monroe County Courthouse with the signing of a proclamation with the County Board Members declaring 4-H week in Monroe County. Three of the 4-H Federation Officers, Cal Sutter, Erin Halleran, and Chet Sutter, attended with 4-H Program Coordinator Kelly Brandt, and 4-H Youth Development Educator, Emily Reece. We are very thankful for the support that the County Board provides!

JUNIOR LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Four Monroe County 4-H members attended the Illinois 4-H Junior Leadership Conference (JLC) on October 15-16 in Decatur. JLC provides 7th & 8th grade 4-H members a look into opportunities in Illinois 4-H and helps them start their leadership journey. Attendees included Natalie Finke Elizabeth Koch Amelia Guebert and Avery Cope. The conference was planned by the Illinois Youth Leadership Team, which Janella Neary is a member of.

ON THE HORIZON
January 24: Welcome to 4-H Workshop
January 31: Ready4Life Entrepreneurship Workshop
February 18: Steer Weigh-in and Winter Show
February 23: Shotgun Club Intro Meeting
CALYX-END CRACKING IN APPLE

‘EverCrisp’ apple fruits are susceptible to the physiological disorder of calyx-end cracking. The cracking appears towards the end of the growth period and develops as concentric cracks located around the calyx end of the fruit. The high incidence of cracking where reported is affecting its marketability and resulting in economic losses. In response, Elizabeth Wahle partnered with Eckert Orchards and the Midwest Apple Improvement Association to initiate a trial on ‘EverCrisp’ apple to assess the effect plant growth regulators may have on reducing calyx-end cracking and on return bloom the following year. Wahle will share results from the harvest evaluation at the Southern Illinois Fruit and Vegetable School.

COVER CROP PLANTING DATE RESEARCH

Cover cropping has many benefits to crop production and the environment, but there is still a lot of knowledge about how best to use cover crops. Nathan Johanning received a grant from the Illinois Soybean Association to gain more of that cover crop knowledge. This project evaluates fall planting dates, two clover species, and cereal rye cover crops used in a corn/soybean crop rotation, along with including four different seeding rates of cereal rye. Johanning is leading this project at five sites with collaborators across the state and one location at the SIU Belleville Research Center near Scott Air Force Base.

Winter survival and spring growth greatly vary with planting date. This project will help to understand that variability and transfer it into field recommendations farmers can use to make cropping decisions.

ON THE HORIZON

January 19: Agronomy Round-Up, Waterloo

January 26: IL Horseradish Growers Conference, Caseyville

February 8: Southern Illinois Fruit and Vegetable School, Mt Vernon

March 29: Pasture Management Workshop, Waterloo
MASTER GARDENERS AND MASTER NATURALISTS HAD A BUSY YEAR WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY. THEY ASSISTED WITH DEMONSTRATION GARDENS, FOOD DONATION GARDENS, INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES REMOVAL IN NATURAL AREAS, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WITH YOUTH AND ADULTS, AND MUCH MORE.

**Master Gardeners:** 8,800 hours  
**Master Naturalists:** 5,400 hours

**Some of the community sites:**
- Annex Building, Waterloo  
- Baebler 4-H Educational Farm, Waterloo  
- Gardens at SIUE, Edwardsville  
- Henry White Farm, Millstadt  
- O’Fallon Community Garden, O’Fallon  
- Village Garden, Godfrey  
- Willoughby Farm, Collinsville

**Horticulture Helpline**
Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists are available year-round to answer homeowner questions and concerns about their yards. In 2022, they answered over 170 questions from Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair. Common questions included managing tree diseases, establishing lawns, identifying weeds, and incorporating more natives into the landscape.

"I appreciate all the information regarding my holly and spruce tree. I was worried they would need to be removed, but I will follow the treatment you recommended" - Homeowner, Edwardsville.

**On the Horizon**
- January 30: Online Master Gardener training starts  
- February 25: Weekend Gardener, TBD  
- March 4: Virtual Weekend Gardener  
- March 8: Gateway Green Conference, Collinsville  
- March 18: Color of Spring, Waterloo

**Let’s Talk Plants Radio Segment**
Master Gardeners and U of I Extension staff participate in a monthly radio segment at WBGZ in Alton. We discuss timely tasks for the garden and how to manage horticulture challenges during the growing season. In October, we discussed the importance of creating a habitat for beneficial insects in the winter. Join us on the first Wednesday of the month at 11 am starting in April. You can hear and view the segment as a podcast on the station's website.
WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS
The Link Between Arthritis and Diet, Air Fryer 101, and How to Stay Healthy during the Holidays were the monthly topics shared with the community at the Monroe County Annex. Sessions reached over 30 adults.

An email from a participant:
“Thanks for the classes you have done so far. I now use my compact air fryer frequently. Before this class, it just sat in a box unopened. Also, I have made the Mediterranean Dip several times. You have so many good ideas.”

FOOD PANTRY OUTREACH
Our Commercial Ag Educator and local farmer donated a surplus of butter squash to the Hope Food Pantry in Columbia to coordinate food access efforts. Butterkin squash is a cross between a pumpkin and butternut squash. Recipes and cooking tips were provided to participants on-site since this is not well-known produce.

COOK WITH KRIS
Clients from Human Support Services (HSS) learned basic cooking skills, how to follow recipes, and to practice food safety through an 8-week workshop. HSS helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to pursue their potential and live their best lives. In December, ten clients participated in a holiday workshop, where they made hot cocoa mix for gifts, reindeer crunch mix, and Santa Grinch fruit kabobs.

ON THE HORIZON
Wellness Wednesdays
Jan 18: Diet Dilemmas
Feb 15: Meals for a Healthy Heart

Kids Cooking Club
Jan 17, Feb 21, Mar 21

Human Support Services Cook with Kris workshops start Jan 23 for 6 weeks.
CONNECT WITH US!

Lalumier Elementary garden faced challenges over the summer with water flooding and a need for volunteers. Despite those challenges, and with the help of several partners, the garden work succeeded in providing fresh produce to the community. For assistance, the garden also received a free trimmer from Glen Carbon’s Lowes, who donated to help maintain the overgrowing weed in the garden. The University of Illinois Extension provided the pantry with healthy recipes for the families to go along with the produce they received. The SNAP-Ed team hosted a garden workday at the end of the gardening season. 4-H Teens on an educational trip from Arizona spent a morning at the garden to help clean it up and close it for the end of the season. Students also learned a lot about food insecurity in the area and how the garden helps increase access to fresh produce for community members.

SHARE TABLE PILOT PROGRAM

The SNAP-Ed team is providing technical assistance to two schools, Bernard Elementary school in Madison County and Mason Clark Middle school in St. Clair County, to implement a share table program at their schools. A "Share table" is a general term to describe how uneaten food items from Child Nutrition Programs may be collected to decrease food waste and redistribute them. Items collected at the share table are redistributed in multiple ways, including the following.

- Items can be saved and claimed for reimbursement at another meal service.
- Items can be sent home with students through a backpack program or used to supplement an in-school food pantry.
- Items can be donated to a non-profit organization (food pantry, foodbank, homeless shelter, etc.).
On November 18, as I was doing paperwork with the participants at Puentes de Esperanza, one named Isidra R. told the person translating our conversation that her coming to the classes had helped her to eat more fruit. The program coordinator expressed that the families that participated in the program were happy with the information I shared with them. Even though there was a language barrier for some, the translator made it easy for families to understand the lesson.

-Chastidy Wilson

FOOD IS A COMMON LANGUAGE SUCCESS STORY

Have a passion for working with families or know someone who does? EFNEP is currently recruiting an INEP administrator and two additional Community Workers. For more information, contact Laquitsha Bejoile-Hayes at LB3@illinois.edu or call 618.875.8939 for details.

WE'RE HIRING TALENT!

ON THE HORIZON

EFENP will be completing training on a new curriculum- Around the Table. Around the Table is a six-week youth and young adult curriculum designed for groups of 7-15 youth ages 14-21. This curriculum aims to increase the health and resilience of the communities we serve. The program is designed to improve cooking skills, food safety, food resource management, and healthy eating, as well as increase awareness surrounding stress, emotional eating, health values, and feeding children.

Participants enjoy hands-on cooking, facilitated conversations, and interactive activities that build healthy connections to food, self, and community.
Thank you for your continued support of Extension and our communities!