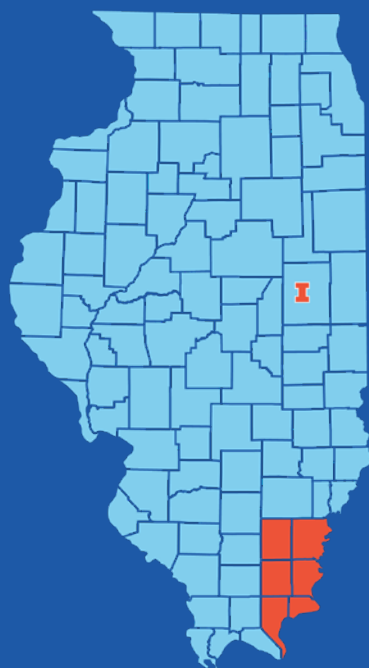




Illinois Extension

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 Note from the County Director

Nothing has been normal in 2020. One of my favorite quotes is, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." When our staff was faced with so many obstacles and unknowns, the only choice we had was to pull together as an Extension team and decide how to continue serving our communities. This report provides you with a snapshot of what was accomplished in 2020. Although the virtual world was not what many of us would have imagined, it allowed us to reach individuals with no prior Extension access and to continue contact with long-time clients and partners.

Please take a moment to look at what was accomplished. I am extremely proud of the outstanding work and forward movement from our team. As we move into 2021, we will most certainly do so with caution and revised protocols for program delivery. Requirements may be new and a bit uncomfortable; however, we make these small requests to continue to provide quality programs and services to our communities. Imagine what can be done if we pull together, continue our traditions, and make memories for years to come.

I want to thank the volunteers, county boards, 4-H and SNAP families, and communities for your support of Extension and the Dixon Springs Ag Center throughout this year. Each and every one is important to us. Change is the only thing that any of us can truly count on. It's how we deal with the change that determines what happens in the end.

I will leave you with my next favorite quote: "Don't look back, we are not going that way."

Sincerely,
Angie Messmer
County Extension Director



Food Production Projects

Local Foods Educator Bronwyn Aly, Ag Gardener Julie Zakes, and Horticulture Program Coordinator Jennifer Warren continued local foods research and demonstration projects during the 2020 season in the high tunnels at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. Research and demonstration trials for the 2019-20 growing season included growing winter vegetables (lettuce, spinach, kale, and carrots); determining the best tomato and pepper varieties; optimizing bell pepper spacing; and hydroponic production of cucumbers, herbs, raspberries, and strawberries. Weekly harvest data was collected from tomato, bell pepper, cucumber, and strawberry trial plots from April through the end of September. This information will be shared at state and regional specialty crops conferences and schools during winter meetings in 2021.

While harvesting and collecting data from the research and demonstration plots at DSAC, observational feedback on the eating quality of different tomato varieties was also solicited. Some of the DSAC staff volunteered to participate in a tomato taste test and provided their opinions on 14 different varieties. The volunteers sampled each tomato without knowing which variety they were tasting. Then, they rated the tomato on its appearance, taste, and texture. They also gave the tomato an overall rating. Their opinions provided observational data for the researchers to use, in addition to the data collected during harvest.



Julie Zakes, ag gardener, and Jennifer Warren, horticulture program coordinator, participate in a tomato taste test, trying 14 different varieties and rating each on its appearance, taste, and texture.

Our annual trials and funded research projects provide information to help growers make decisions on various production practices, such as variety selection, in upcoming seasons. This information can have a significant economic impact in their farming operations. An excellent example of how this information is shared can be seen in the recently published High Tunnel Cucumber Production Guide ID-521-W from Purdue Extension. A portion of the information included in this Midwest regional production guide was generated from research conducted at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center by Aly and Zakes as part of a Sustainable Agriculture Research Education Grant. Their research was also included in an article for HortTechnology, a scientific journal.

2020 Harvest from Research and Demonstration Plots



3,300 lbs. Cucumbers

2,800 lbs. Tomatoes

750 lbs. Peppers

145 lbs. Strawberries

With Extension staff working from home, the distribution of donated produce was limited to locations mostly in Pope and Hardin counties and included Shawnee Development Council Food Pantries (1,325 lbs.); Pope County School (100 lbs.); Hardin County School (65 lbs.); Golconda Golden Circle (650 lbs.); and other community entities, such as churches, resource centers, and individuals/families (more than 1,000 lbs.). Produce was also sold to various wholesale outlets, which generated \$1,888.93.





Local Food Happenings at DSAC

While in-person programming and workshops were not an option, Extension staff had to get creative in finding ways to continue engaging with stakeholders. One of the positive outcomes that arose from the COVID-19 situation was the development of a video log, or “vlog,” called Local Food Happenings at DSAC. Bronwyn Aly, local foods educator, recorded weekly video updates documenting the progress of various fruit and vegetable research and demonstration plots at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. A total of 19 videos were shared through social media. A playlist on the Illinois Extension Local Foods and Small Farms YouTube channel generated over 4,300 views. Along with documenting crop growth throughout the season, Aly was also able to offer information on various practices and techniques involved in high tunnel production, including insect scouting, cucumber and tomato trellising and training, hydroponic strawberry production, soil sampling, common physiological disorders of tomatoes, EC/pH meter and fertility monitoring, and more. Aly plans to continue to utilize this platform to share information with stakeholders, but will also be planning for in-person demonstrations and workshops once programming restrictions can be safely lifted.



View Local Food Happenings at DSAC videos
facebook.com/localfoodssmallfarmsUofIExtensionsouthernIL
youtube.com/c/IllinoisLocalFoods.



IDOA Specialty Crops Block Grant

In 2018, Aly received an Illinois Department of Agriculture Specialty Crops Block Grant, in the amount of \$80,880, for her project Utilizing High Tunnels to Maximize Winter Vegetable Production. Research plots were established in early August 2019 for the first year of this two-year project, with weekly data collection from fall 2019 through late spring 2020.

An onsite program discussing winter high tunnel vegetable production was held at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center on December 16, 2019. Participants asked numerous questions about winter vegetable production.

Year two research plots were established in August 2020, with subsequent plantings following throughout the fall. Weekly data collection has been occurring since mid-September and is expected to continue into the spring of 2021. This project compares the effects of plant date, black plastic mulch versus no mulch, and row cover versus no row cover on production and quality of carrots, kale, lettuce, and spinach. Spinach, kale, and lettuce will have multiple harvests from the same plants in the same plots over the course of the fall, winter, and spring, depending on initial planting date.



Data generated from this project has been shared at local, regional, and statewide meetings; in monthly newsletter articles; and through vlog posts on social media platforms. This information will help vegetable growers plan for winter markets and sales, and generate additional farm income in what is typically a time of little to no cash flow. High tunnels allow growers to extend their growing seasons both earlier and later in the year and can even allow for year-round production, depending on the crops being grown.





Orange Is the New Green Completes Third and Final Year

Over the course of the last three years, From Orange to Green — Equipping Offenders with the Skills to Enter the New Urban Agriculture Economy, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, led participating offenders through a complete introductory program on plant propagation and care, urban and small farm crop production, food nutrition, and small business entrepreneurship in partnership. The project was a collaboration among Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, a local nonprofit organization; Illinois Department of Corrections; Bronwyn Aly, Extension local food systems and small farms educator; Ron Duncan, Extension community and economic development educator (retired); Robin Johnston, SNAP-Ed work program participant; Madhu Viswanathan, Gies College of Business professor of business administration (retired); and Nathan Ryder, onsite independent contractor and project coordinator. Through this project, unit staff addressed food safety and security, as well as economic development and workforce preparedness, two of the five grand challenges identified by Illinois Extension. Completion of the various established curricula provided a recognized standard credential to show basic competency suitable for entry- to mid-level employment or ownership in specialty crop production operations, or other agricultural or green industry-related fields.

Project Objectives:

- Reduce recidivism rates
- Increase employment opportunities through education and accredited certificates
- Increase education on health benefits of fresh produce
- Identify potential employers or entrepreneurial opportunities

Once I began the Master Gardener program...filled with enthusiasm and a fascination to want to know and learn all I can about plant growth and its meaning to our overall civilization...There is no new step I can take without me marveling at nature...it has changed my life for the better. It has changed the way that I view the world and given me a greater value for life, all life... its impact will be seen for generations to come as it will change the lives of us who are viewed as useless with that value and give us a new sense of purpose and a place in this world. The Master Gardener program is a success, just take it from me...who only knew drug dealing and violence, and now all I think about is nature and farming.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



Youth High Tunnel Addresses Food Insecurity

Once again, the youth high tunnel at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center helped address the food insecurity issues faced by many members of our community. Extension grew and distributed fresh vegetables from the youth high tunnel to local food pantries. While 4-H families could not be onsite this season to help with the planting, maintaining, and harvesting of the fresh produce due to COVID-19 restrictions, DSAC staff were more than happy to keep the tunnel in full production during the 2020 growing season, harvesting just over 300 pounds of fresh produce.

The youth high tunnel also provides an area to observe new or different vegetable varieties not normally included in other research plots onsite.

Illinois Extension Awards Collaboration Grant

University of Illinois Extension hosts an internal competitive grant opportunity encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations to strengthen the bridge between campus-based researchers and Extension programs. Bronwyn Aly, local foods educator, was part of a team that applied for and received one of these grants — one of only 17 funded in 2020.

Aly will be working with Extension Entomologist Dr. Kacie Athey on an applied research project studying the use of natural predator insects to control insect pests within high tunnel production systems. From a survey of fruit and vegetable high tunnel producers conducted in 2017, insect management was ranked as a high priority research need. The budget for this grant-funded project, Sustainable Insect Control In High Tunnel Vegetable Production Through Biological Control, is just under \$60,000 and will provide plot fees to the DSAC operating budget that will help offset maintenance costs.



Fruit damage caused by thrips, a major insect pest in high tunnel production. A grant-funded project will look for sustainable control options using natural predator insects.



LGE Local Government Education

Our local government education programs increased outreach in response to the COVID-19 crisis and developed a critical partnership with the Illinois Office of Broadband's initiative to extend high-speed internet access across the state.



go.illinois.edu/communitybroadband

The 2020 Leadership Academy pivoted to a virtual platform, offering county officials online workshops on a variety of topics, including crisis communications, managing economic development initiatives, finding and using data, leadership styles, managing change, ethical considerations, fiscal and economic impacts of COVID-19, and reversing population decline.



go.illinois.edu/leadershipacademy

Statewide Webinar Reach



37
Webinars in 2020



1,706
Reached In Community Involvement
and Leadership Webinars



926
Reached in Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion Webinars



5,182
Reached in Economic and
Financial Stability Webinars



1,115
Reached in Community Resiliency Webinars

The University of Illinois Extension's community and economic development team helps communities build capacity for creative and informed decision-making to enhance their quality of life.



<https://go.illinois.edu/LGE>




4-H Takes Positive Youth Development Virtual

4-H staff statewide designed and delivered a new suite of online experiences so youth could continue to thrive!



400+
Competitive events,
fairs, and shows



200+
Programs

went completely *virtual*

Our 4-H Clubs remained resilient with more than:



20,500
Club Members



1,900
Clubs



3,400
Adult Volunteers



2,000
Youth Volunteers



No matter what is happening in the world, 4-H stands ready to innovate to meet the needs of today's youth!



Gallatin County 4-H



Gallatin County 4-H Saddle Club organized a horse workshop held at the Saline County Fairgrounds. Stephanie Speiser, Southern Illinois University senior lecturer in animal science, food, and nutrition, explained and demonstrated how the equine skeletal system works, in addition to covering general care topics. She explained the function of the bone structures, painted their location on a live horse, and invited participants to touch and feel structures for a hands-on experience. Speiser demonstrated how to take equine vital signs and explained why these are an important indicator of health. She also showed some topline building techniques and answered a wide array of health, training, and equine psychology questions.



Kathryn Scates, 4-H program coordinator, assisted Billy Kato in presenting the importance of proper hoof balance to a horse's health and soundness. Kato brought his horse shoeing trailer and forge. He demonstrated how he balances a

hoof and shapes the shoe to best support the structure of the foot. Using real examples, he showed the interior structures of hooves and various types of shoes, and demonstrated how to shape a shoe.



We are excited to have barred owl nest boxes, thanks to the Dyhrkopp family of Gallatin County. This statewide project is designed to see if barred owls prefer a traditional nest box with a hole in the front, or a modified, open top version.

Hamilton County 4-H

At the beginning of 2020, Hamilton County 4-H held a unit-wide candle making workshop and visited the Veterans Hospital in Marion, where they distributed hundreds of Valentines.

As fair season approached, Paula Hatfield, 4-H program coordinator, and Kathy Oglesby, office support assistant, set up the virtual exhibition format and recruited judges to review projects from photos and video submissions, while working from home. Although the total number of exhibits in 2020 was down from previous years, the youth were resilient and showed great follow-through. There were 25 participants at International Night and four entries in public speaking. Three members exhibited six dog, cat, and small animal projects; 30 members exhibited 62 general projects; eight members exhibited 12 livestock projects; and six members exhibited 13 poultry and rabbit projects. Additionally, 16 members exhibited projects at the state fair and there was one public speaking entry at the state fair, which was also virtual. Congratulations to all of the youth who participated during a difficult year.

Throughout the year, youth and volunteers conducted community service activities. They held food drives and made cards for local nursing homes and senior care facilities. They also made and distributed hundreds of masks to the local hospital, school, and nursing home facilities.



Hamilton County youth have fun with Paula Hatfield, 4-H program coordinator, during the afterschool program.



Pope/Hardin County 4-H

4-H is still going strong in Pope and Hardin counties, thanks in no small part to community support. The Clover for Care campaign raised more than \$200 for the local food pantry. These funds helped the food pantry complete Thanksgiving dinners and contributed to the purchase of meat for Christmas dinners. Pope-Hardin County 4-H members made cards that were added to each Christmas dinner handed out by the food pantry.

Despite the challenges faced in 2020, Extension was still able to engage youth and provide learning opportunities in new ways. Sometimes, we just have to accept the change and think outside the box. Many positive outcomes were observed in additional opportunities afforded to our 4-H members. At the virtual 4-H fairs, shy members felt more comfortable completing a project form and uploading a photo or video of each project for a judge to evaluate, rather than standing in front of them in person. And, unlike years past, when seven or eight members were able to attend the Illinois State Fair, 16 members attended the virtual state fair in 2020. Two Pope-Hardin County 4-H members won Champion at the state fair level and two additional members won an Inspire Award.

Leadership conferences were also held virtually, allowing members to attend without having to worry about travel and overnight stay expenses.

Virtual Holiday Fun

In honor of the season, 4-H hosted a holiday ornament workshop and a virtual tree decorating contest. Youth learned how to make a variety of holiday ornaments and fun hot cocoa reindeer!



(left) Alyssa Counts' entry in the virtual tree decorating contest; (right) Coy Wilson participates in the virtual ornament workshop.

Saline County 4-H

For Saline County 4-H, 2020 began as usual. Entries were gathered for the Handbook Cover Contest, committees met to plan for animal weigh-ins and upcoming exhibitions, and 4-H staff delivered 3-D printing and college and career readiness programming at Galatia, Eldorado, and Harrisburg high schools.

Youth from all six counties bowled at Ross Cotton Lanes. Non-perishables were collected and donated to the Eldorado Methodist Church food pantry. Saline County 4-H participated in a unit-wide candle making workshop and the Valentines for Veterans community service project.



And then...COVID-19 hit! Staff moved their offices to their homes and began to rethink 4-H and all of their program delivery methods. Immediately, they began planning possible ways to work and connect with families, and change exhibitions to a virtual format.



Lads & Lassies 4-H Club and Nock 'N Load Shooting Sports SPIN Club donated food collected during the October Club Food Challenge to the Galatia Food Pantry.

National 4-H Week kicked off with socially-distanced mayor proclamation signings, virtual workshops, community service projects, online staff meetings, fun virtual contests, and 4-H virtual fair exhibitions. Extension staff were able to find 4-H judges willing to evaluate projects, including livestock and animals, in a virtual format. They also created PowerPoint presentations to showcase 4-H projects for all to see, to announce and congratulate the winners, and to recognize youth and adults just as they would at a normal, in-person Achievement Night.

4-H is valuable and growing in Saline County. The theme for the 2020-21 4-H year is, "Experiment with 4-H: There's Opportunity 4 All!". The opportunities for our youth to learn, succeed, and become contributing citizens to our communities are endless.



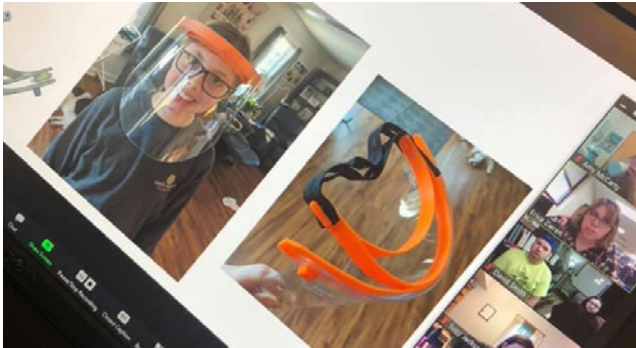
Haylee Brown's Virtual Pumpkin Decorating Contest entry won Best in Show.



White County 4-H

In May 2020, White County 4-H parent Erica Zieren led a 3-D printing workshop over Zoom.

Ten members enjoyed learning how to use Tinker Cad software to create a wide variety of designs, including a ring, a picture frame, and an iPod case. After each 4-H member created their own design, Extension staff printed them. The projects were exhibited during each county's virtual 4-H show in July.



Johanna Zieren demonstrates the face shields made by 3-D printing workshop participants for staff at a local nursing home.



The 2020 White County 4-H Pork Chop Supper was a big success.

Don Duvall, director of the Illinois Corn Marketing Board District 13, delivered a generous \$500 donation on behalf of the board to the White County 4-H program. Pictured below (left to right) are Angela Messmer, county Extension director and director of the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center; Amy McCarty, Extension program coordinator for White County; Duvall; and Melissa Wilson, Extension 4-H youth educator.



Extension thanks the board for their generous support of the 4-H program in White County.



(Left) Kendra Vaughn, 4-H program coordinator in Pope/Hardin counties, poses in front of the backdrop for Virtual Achievement Night. (Right) Birthday bags for the Christian Community Compassion Center.



Nancy Lambert, 4-H program coordinator in Saline County, assists with the 2020 Hamilton County 4-H Christmas Candy Fundraiser.

Saline County Socially Distant Mayor Proclamation Signings for National 4-H Week 2020





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

During a virtual MyPlate for MyFamily class in White County, SNAP-Ed participants were taught how to use the new MyPlate app that is available to help with making healthy choices. One participant shared that using the app helped her lose 13 pounds!
- Ashley Gilmour, SNAP-Ed community worker

SNAP-Ed Community Partnerships



23
K-12 Schools



12
Early Childhood



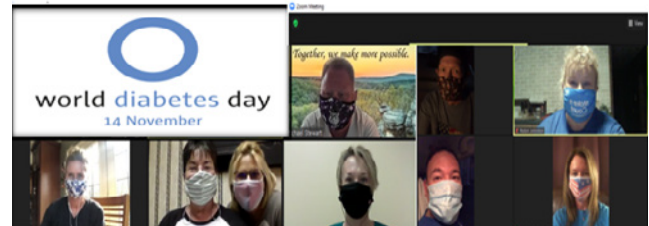
24
Agencies or Community Centers



18
Emergency Food Sites

Staff Receive Interdisciplinary Unit Team Excellence Award

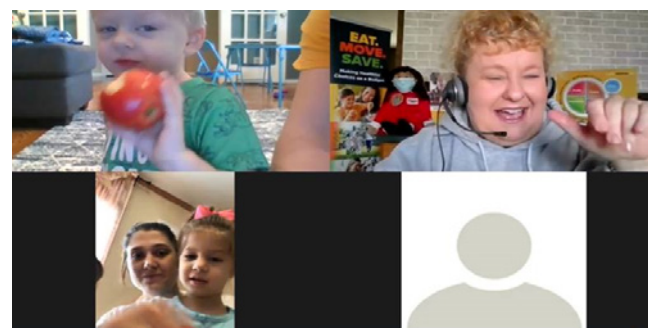
Congratulations to Bronwyn Aly, local food systems and small farms educator, and Robin Johnston, SNAP-Ed work program participant, who were part of the USDA-funded project From Orange to Green from 2017-20. The project provided low-resource and veteran prison offenders a series of credentialed, non-credit agricultural, nutritional, and business training programs, including Master Gardener training, Preparing a New Generation of Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Farmers, SNAP-Ed Eat Smart Be Active certification, USDA MyPlate, pesticide safety education and applicator training, and Mastering the Marketplace. These existing educational programs were synthesized to create a continuum of learning over a 50-week period of instruction for offenders at the Vienna Correctional Center. The team received an Interdisciplinary Unit Team Excellence Award in the fall of 2020 in recognition of their work.



SNAP-Ed staff partnered with Egyptian Health Department to participate in World Diabetes Day.



Nancy Hardy, INEP work program participant in Hamilton/White counties, retired from Illinois Extension in 2020. We wish her the best.



An EatPlayGrow virtual pre-K class in action with Robin Johnston, work program participant.



White County Voucher Program

The portion of the White County population living in poverty has increased over the years, while services to support people in poverty have remained stagnant. One of the programs that helped fight food insecurity was the school district’s backpack program, but Tri-State Food Bank stopped offering this grant. Concerned citizens met on several occasions to discuss innovative ideas for a new backpack program. The group felt strongly about trying to keep the money local and hoped to address dignity concerns, which kept some children and families from participating in the previous program. Youth were being labeled “poor” as they walked out of the school on Fridays carrying a large bag of food.

The board decided to pilot a voucher program and Illinois Extension began to connect the dots. Pam Haywood, SNAP-Ed program coordinator, worked with the school guidance counselor to coordinate who would receive these vouchers and how they would be distributed. 5th Street Market, located in the middle of our poverty tracker, agreed to redeem the program vouchers. After a few months of collaborative testing, the program was rolled out on February 1, 2020.

Approximately 126 children/families are receiving vouchers to take home and redeem at the local market. At the beginning of each month, a booklet with four weekly vouchers is distributed to eligible students. There are designated food items and shelving to direct participants in the market. The feedback received so far has been great.

Once a month, Extension staff pick up the vouchers that have been redeemed and pay 5th Street Market for the food items. The vouchers allow Extension to track how many people are using the program and what food items they are choosing, providing a baseline for next year’s program.

Illinois Nutrition Education Programs are on Facebook! Like us for recipes, event pictures, and nutrition information.



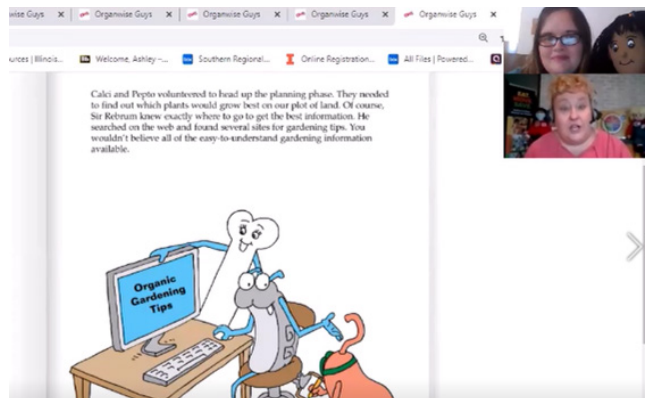
facebook.com/IllinoisNEP



(From left to right) Pam Haywood, SNAP-Ed program coordinator; Angie Messmer, Extension county director; and Ashley Hoffman, SNAP-Ed educator, at 5th Street Market in Carmi.



(Left) West Side Primary School banana song; (right) Robin Johnston sets up a healthy foods informational table at Kroger in Harrisburg.



In a great example of how SNAP-Ed staff adapted during COVID-19, Ashley Gilmour and Robin Johnston deliver a virtual Organ Wise Guys program.



In 2020, the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center became part of University of Illinois Extension serving Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Pope, Saline, and White counties.

The Dixon Springs Agricultural Center was established in 1934 on about 5,100 acres of unglaciated Ozark Uplift land near Simpson in Pope County. It is the largest experiment station of its kind east of the Mississippi River. DSAC links the laboratories and classrooms of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with U.S. Department of Agriculture, farms, and concerned stakeholders in southern Illinois. DSAC has provided research and programming for over 80 years and, throughout those years, research priorities and programs have changed to meet the needs at hand. As DSAC enters a new era, as research and program adjustments are made to meet the ever-changing environment, the coordination between programs, needs, funding, and the delivery of results are more important than ever.

DSAC plays a key role in statewide coordinated agricultural research programs and provides targeted opportunities for continued economic development in the southern part of the state. Described as an outdoor research laboratory, DSAC is continuing strong in 2021, supporting large-scale experiments directly related to commercial agriculture and resulting in projects and programs of significant importance to stakeholders in the region. Beef cattle research programs focusing on grazing management, nutrition, genetics, and reproduction are integral to the research capacity of the Department of Animal Sciences. Programs in the areas of horticultural crop production and system-based land stewardship are of importance to area growers and are an important part of continued economic development efforts in southern Illinois.

The Ag & Natural Resources and Local Foods Systems/Small Farms programs are located on the grounds of the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. In 2020, 753 people participated in face-to-face programming and 10,031 people participated in virtual programming.

Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences

NRES was able to hold four in-person events before the COVID-19 lockdown, including workshops on maple syrup collection, backyard maple syrup production, and rare plants.



While adults gathered outside DSAC for the maple syrup workshop, youth participated in indoor activities, including taste-testing the syrup on pancakes that they made.



Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences continued successful educational programs through virtual platforms, while utilizing DSAC resources for demonstrations. NRES maintains an oak-hickory forest using different management practices to stimulate forest regeneration. The newly established chestnut tree demonstration site will allow for future research as these trees mature. Conversion of open lands into native pollinator habitats is still ongoing. Extension also maintains cover crop and forage demonstration plots. NRES continues to work with U.S. Forest Service - Shawnee National Forest to provide complimentary trainings and support policies and procedures that enhance best practices and management systems.



Animal Sciences

Animal Sciences maintains a herd of 900 cattle and ensures that University of Illinois is supplied with at least 500 calves annually for research purposes. In 2020, Dixon Springs Agricultural Center bred over 650 calves. Of those, 500 were supplied to the Urbana-Champaign campus and 150 were being raised to enhance the herd at DSAC. DSAC remains the research facility with the largest herd in this region. DSAC can breed as many as 800 cows in one day through artificial insemination. This allows for consistent and reliable reproduction data. Students involved in animal sciences at Illinois can experience any number of applied science technologies, including artificial intelligence, vaccine administration, ultrasound, biopsies, and applied research. Opportunities of this magnitude would not be available without DSAC.

By employing pasture management practices, DSAC has been able to transform useless, vacant fields into productive pastures. Over 500 acres were reclaimed and introduced into the grazing rotation in 2020. The repurposing of DSAC land is an investment in the program with a long-term goal to reclaim the pasture for self-sustaining feed production.



DSAC Partners

The impact of DSAC programs, which are supported by state appropriation, is in the continued advancement of practices in beef cattle production, forestry management, and horticulture that lead to a diversification of agriculture in the region, increases in farm income, and new production and marketing opportunities for small to medium-sized producers.

Ongoing research at DSAC is represented by University of Illinois Extension, the Department of Animal Sciences, and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. More specifically, this research includes observation trials of various vegetable crops, both hydroponic and in-ground, in raised bed production systems within high tunnels; beef cattle reproductive physiology; forest ecology; soil health; forestry policy; and invasive species control.

Additionally, DSAC has a number of ongoing partnerships with U.S. Forest Service - Shawnee National Forest, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development, Southern Illinois University, Southeastern Illinois College, GreenCorps Chicago, and Morton Arboretum.



New Grants & Research Projects

- Invasive Plant Species as Risk Factors for Tickborne Disease in Humans and Livestock: A One Health Approach to Sustainable Agricultural Communities. T. Steckler | Awarded 2019 | Research period 2019-22 (extended one year due to COVID)
- Evaluation of Grazing Management Systems' Impact on Cow Performance and Economics. D.W. Shike, W.T. Meteer, and T.L. Steckler | Awarded 2020 by Illinois Beef Association | Research period 2020-21
- Sustainable Insect Control in High Tunnel Vegetable Production through Biological Control. K. Athey, and B. Aly | Awarded 2020 | Research period 2021-22



Dixon Springs Agricultural Center Staff



Joey Parr
Building Mechanic
DSAC



Stacey Simmons
Farm Mechanic
DSAC



Sandra Ethridge
Office Support Associate
DSAC



Jennifer Warren
Program Coordinator
Ag & Natural Resources



Seth Parks
Building Mechanic
-Extra Help, DSAC

Council Member	County	City
Kim Bainbridge	Hardin	Elizabethtown
Natalie Bonnell	Pope	Golconda
Tony Eckert	Pope	Golconda
Cole Fechtig	White	Burnt Prairie
Shelley Friend	Pope	Simpson
Holly Healy	White	Norris City
Kate Miller	Hamilton	Macedonia
Lisa Miller	Hamilton	Macedonia
Hank Oldham	Gallatin	Shawneetown
Jennifer Parker	Hamilton	McLeansboro
Douglas Patton	Hardin	Elizabethtown
Stacy Phillips	White	Norris City
Jimmy Richey	Saline	Galatia
Donna Rumsey	Saline	Galatia
Brandon Vickery	Gallatin	Shawneetown
Alex Watkins	Saline	Harrisburg





Angie Messmer
Extension County Director



Bronwyn Aly
Educator
Local Foods Systems/
Small Farms



Melissa Wilson
Educator
Youth Development



Julie Zakes
Ag Gardener
Pope/Hardin County



Lois Jones
Office Support Assistant
Saline County



Katharine Oglesby
Office Support Assistant
Hamilton County



Sheila Turrentine
Office Support Assistant
White County



Sheila Stamer
Office Support Associate
Fiscal



Paula Hatfield
Program Coordinator,
Youth
Hamilton County



Nancy Lambert
Program Coordinator, 4-H
and Youth Development
Saline County



Amy McCarty
Program Coordinator, 4-H
and Youth Development
White County



Kathryn Scates
Program Coordinator, 4-H
and Youth Development
Gallatin County



Kendra Vaughn
Program Coordinator,
4-H
Pope/Hardin County



Pamela Haywood
Program Coordinator,
SNAP-Ed



Nancy Hardy
Work Program
Participant, SNAP-Ed
Hamilton/White Counties



Robin Johnston
Work Program
Participant, SNAP-Ed
Gallatin/Saline Counties



Lacey Barnhill
Community Worker,
INEP
Pope/Hardin Counties



Ashley Gilmour
Community Worker,
SNAP-Ed
White County



OFFICE INFORMATION

Gallatin County

216 S. Murphy
Ridgway, IL 62979
(618) 272-3022
Fax: (618) 272-3024
Monday - Wednesday

Hamilton County

100 S. Jackson (Courthouse Basement)
McLeansboro, IL 62859
(618) 643-3416
Fax: (618) 643-3206
Monday - Friday

Pope/Hardin County

354 State Hwy. 145 North
Simpson, IL 62985
(618) 695-6060
Fax: (618) 695-2492
Monday - Thursday

Saline County

912 S. Commercial St., Suite 4
Harrisburg, IL 62946
(618) 252-8391
Fax: (618) 253-3006
Monday - Friday

White County

1715 College Avenue
Carmi, IL 62821
(618) 382-2662
Fax: (618) 382-2276
Monday - Friday

Dixon Springs Agricultural Center

354 State Hwy. 145 North
Simpson, IL 62985
(618) 695-2441
Fax (618) 695-2492
Monday - Friday

ONLINE



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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.

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