



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



2020 IMPACT REPORT

University of Illinois Extension
Fulton, Mason, Peoria and Tazewell Counties

UNIT AT A GLANCE

The People



Staff
36



Volunteers
698



Partners
344

The Processes



Online
160 programs
6,624 participants



In Person
34,000
43% by Staff
57% by Volunteers



Media
223
News Releases,
Newsletters, TV, Radio

The Strategy

The Locations

TAZEWELL MAIN OFFICE

1505 Valle Vista Blvd
Pekin, IL 61554
309-347-6614

FULTON BRANCH

15411 N IL 100 Hwy
Lewistown, IL 61542
309-547-3711

MASON BRANCH

127 S High St, Ste 1
Havana, IL 62644
309-543-3308

PEORIA BRANCH

4810 N Sheridan Rd
Peoria, IL 61614
309-685-3140

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MasonPeoriaTazewell

Guiding Principle

Making people and communities better.

Mission

To extend research-based information, technology, and best practices from the university arena into public and private arenas in order to strengthen local communities and improve people's lives.

Vision

To adapt research-based knowledge into accessible forms so that every person we serve will experience and recognize a positive impact from our work.

Process

Direct Education
Facilitated Engagement

Experiential Learning
Collaborative Outreach

Scope

Agriculture
Horticulture
Natural Resources

Nutrition & Wellness
4-H Youth Development
Community & Economic Dev.

Financial Report

REVENUES	\$2.7 Million
Federal	46.6%
State	14.9%
University	14.2%
Local	21.6%
Other	2.7%

EXPENDITURES	\$2.7 Million
Personnel	74.9%
Programming	14.1%
Equipment	0.5%
Overhead	10.5%

Fiscal Year 2020



DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS



What an unusual and unexpected year 2020 turned out to be. For many people and communities, it

was a year of hardship, sacrificing important plans, and much adjusting. These effects touched University of Illinois Extension people and programs at both the state and unit levels, although certainly not to the degree that some in our communities were forced to experience.

In this *2020 Year in Review*, we highlight a few of the many programs and opportunities our staff implemented to help people and communities who dealt with these hardships. Our staff worked diligently to transition on-going programs as well as provide new programs that met the new needs.

Our program reporting year generally runs from November to October. This past program year was about half the year in

a "normal" environment, and the other half doing our work and conducting programming in a mostly remote/virtual environment. The situation caused us to close our public offices from mid-March to mid-July and work entirely from remote locations. From July through the end of the year, we operated in a hybrid work mode in which public offices were partially staffed to provide curbside services to clientele, volunteers, and stakeholders. The majority of our staff continued to work from their remote offices.

2020 marked additional changes in the lives of three of our staff who decided to retire from Extension after successful careers serving our local communities. Petra Eberle and Cheryl Russell played important roles in the lives of many youth and adults through their roles as nutrition instructors. Ian Goslin, horticulture coordinator, retired from his Extension career

but we are thankful to have his continued support through his volunteer role as a Master Naturalist. Congratulations and best wishes to each of them in their new chapter of life.

While this booklet is just a glimpse of the programming that happens in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit, I hope that you are inspired by the stories and impact that are mentioned here. We enjoy sharing the impact Extension programs provide that make people and our communities better.

Even as we reflect on the accomplishments of the year we look forward as we leave 2020 behind.

Thank you for learning with us, serving with us, and supporting us.

Earl Allen
County Director

COMMUNITY & ECONOMY

POVERTY SIMULATION

On February 14, we partnered with Dream Center Peoria and East Peoria Junior High to walk the school's 200+ teachers and staff through a poverty simulation to help participants rethink poverty and become part of the solution. Community Economic Development (CED) Educator Kathie Brown and state CED Specialist Nancy Ouedraogo played key roles in the program's success.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson

Local Government Education Webinar Offerings Grow in 2020

Local Government Education (LGE) webinars have been a staple educational offering from Extension for the past nine years. This year, the Community and Economic Development (CED) team tripled their webinar efforts by offering 35 webinars that reached more than 5,000 people. In addition, thousands of people continue to utilize them through the recordings on YouTube.

Locally, Kathie Brown, CED educator, directly assisted with six LGE webinars, plus two similar webinars that focused on helping support local economic development needs.

"One of the reasons for the increase in LGE webinar offerings was the extra efforts our state CED team made to provide valuable information and support to local officials and businesses as we navigated the fluctuating

environment of 2020," stated Brown. "I was able to assist with one of the first COVID related webinars held April 3. Almost 500 people joined us online and so far the recording has 110 views."

Throughout the year, the CED team held five COVID related LGE webinars. They also offered Scaling Up Restaurant Operations webinars targeted to restaurant owners, managers, and food service suppliers.

More than 550 people from throughout Illinois participated in the two-part Scaling Up webinar series. The series featured suppliers, food safety experts, and two local restaurants: Edge by Chef Dustin Allen in Peoria Heights and [CxT] Roasting Company in Peoria.

"Our programming partnerships help to make programming strong and ensure that we reach

our target audience," explained Brown. "Engaging with Illinois Restaurant Association and U of I Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition played a major role in the success of Scaling Up."

ADDITIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

- ▶ Illinois Assoc. of County Officials
- ▶ National Association of Counties
- ▶ Institute for Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois
- ▶ Illinois Attorney General
- ▶ Heyl Roster
- ▶ Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- ▶ Connect Illinois, Illinois Office of Broadband
- ▶ Benton Institute for Broadband and Society
- ▶ Paul Simon Public Policy Institute - Southern Illinois University
- ▶ Elevate Energy and Citizens Utility Board
- ▶ Rural Partners
- ▶ North Central Regional Center for Rural Development



Photo by Anita Wilkinson

USDA Rural Economic Development Innovation Initiative Spurs Fulton County Economic Development Planning and Helps Secure Grants

The Fulton County USDA Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) initiative was launched in January to help the county create and implement an economic development plan. The planning process was facilitated by Extension staff from Illinois, Purdue, and University of Kentucky.

The plan captures the values and priorities of the community and articulates a series of goals all intended to provide guidance for local decision-makers. The goals are based on analysis of trends and conditions in the county; conversations with residents, community leaders, and farmland owners; and input at public meetings.

More than 20 businesses and organizations from throughout the county participated in the initial USDA REDI workshop held at The Nature Conservancy office at Emiquon. Their discussions

focused on four major areas:

- workforce development
- diversity and inclusion
- innovation & entrepreneurship
- quality of life and place

Participants explored these topics from a county perspective to generate ideas on how a healthy and thriving rural economic development climate can be created.

Discussions and plan development continued throughout the year via committee work.

The most important benefits of REDI is that it created a platform for new connections among community members, expanded networks, built local capacity for action, all while providing critical technical support and allowing an opportunity to identify and discuss important issues — together.

As the plan was being created, the local REDI team pursued grants to support their goals using the rich data and information provided through this project. By the end of 2020, three grants have been secured.

GRANTS SECURED WITH THE HELP OF USDA REDI INITIATIVE WORK

Connect Illinois Grant

\$3,123,122 to build a Fiber to the Premises serving 581 households, businesses, farms, and anchor institutions in Fulton, Peoria, and Knox counties

Economic Development Administration Economic Adjustment Grant

\$4 million for workforce development programming at Spoon River College

USDA Rural Business Development grant

\$90,454 for the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development



Extension Partnerships Provide Avenue for The Gies College of Business Students to Do Real-World Projects

The Magelli Office of Experiential Learning provides opportunities for University of Illinois Gies College of Business students to gain hands-on experience working on real-world projects for Fortune 100 corporations, mid-sized and startup companies, and nonprofit organizations. This concept is integrated throughout the undergraduate and graduate programs. It provides exceptional learning experiences for students and supports community entrepreneurship and small business development.

Streator Incubator Feasibility Study

The City of Streator contracted with Illinois Business Consulting, the University of Illinois Economic Development Association (EDA) University Center, and Illinois Extension to provide a study on the economic impact of investing in resources for local business. The analysis and evaluation (with recommendations) of the current incubator were conducted through key informant interviews of tenants, community members, and similar incubator sites in Illinois and surrounding states.

Morton eCommerce Distribution Center

Communities everywhere are looking for creative uses of abandoned retail space. Morton Economic Development Council and Illinois Extension partnered with The Gies College of Business to explore the feasibility of creating an e-commerce distribution center for small businesses in their community. Students completed this work with community leaders as part of the Master of Science in Technology Management (MSTM) Practicum.

Distillery Labs – Illinois Innovation Network Peoria Hub Pro Forma Development

The Gies College of Business MSTM collaborated with Distillery Labs, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (EDC), and Illinois Extension to identify what systems would be most valuable to the incubation center to improve the operating efficiency. Students working in partnership with community mentors met weekly to discuss findings and develop appropriate follow-up research that led to a series of recommendations for integration of technology in the future Distillery Labs site.

Distillery Labs – Illinois Innovation Network Peoria Hub Smart Cities

In the second of three projects with Distillery Labs, The Gies College of Business MSTM focused on a Smart Cities study designed to serve the community in multiple dimensions with an emphasis on applications that have the greatest potential to impact the quality of life in Peoria. Their research for both the near term and future use of Smart City concepts will be used by Distillery Labs – Smart Cities Vertical team to build interest for community stakeholders along the Main Street corridor.

Greater Peoria EDC – Strategies for Building Sustainable Business and Resilient Small Business

Small businesses and startups do experience resource constraints, shortage of skills, and lack of knowledge about technological advancements or services that could help optimize their growth and revenue. The MSTM 2020 student team worked in partnership with the Greater Peoria EDC and Illinois Extension to identify tools that would support the business transitioning process.

College of Fine and Applied Arts - Department of Urban and Regional Planning Projects Launched Throughout Fulton, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell

University of Illinois Extension has been very intentional in its pursuit of building effective campus partnerships. This work continues to pay great dividends to our communities and students alike. The Department of Urban and Regional Planning within the College of Fine and Applied Arts has engaged with Kathie Brown, Extension community and economic development educator for 20 years. In 2020, four projects were ongoing in our unit.

Opportunity Zone Projects in Havana and Canton

Ximin "Shelley" Piao, graduate student, is currently researching and developing strategies for rural Opportunity Zones (OZ) for her capstone project. City of Havana, City of Canton, Mason County, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) joined forces to support the development of local plans. The

main goal was to launch a pilot effort designed to help rural OZs develop and market a locally-driven "Investment Prospectus" built on sound information and strong community buy-in.

Greater Peoria Economic Development Strategy

Greater Peoria Economic Development Council engaged with graduate student intern Lee Arum in building the local Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). A CEDS plan provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts best serve economic development in the region. The planning process included bi-monthly steering committee meetings, BIG Table discussions in rural communities throughout the region, as well as working groups in each of the

key strategic areas – Economy, Workforce, Quality of Life, and Natural Resources.

Morton Housing Strategies Capstone Project

Quality housing plays a large role in local economies because it promotes positive health, education, and economic outcomes for the community. Morton Economic Development Council and Chamber of Commerce engaged in this applied research study, which served as a capstone project for graduate student Hunter Filler. Data and information gathered as part of this study have resulted in a new housing model that will add another layer of desirable housing to Morton's livability landscape.

Peoria Transportation Investment Equity Study

City of Peoria engaged with U of I as part of a spring community case study designed to explore more equitable models for prioritizing public investment in neighborhood transportation. Student teams developed three different equity-based prioritization tools to help Peoria guide implementation of public infrastructure investments with consideration for local historic and geographic disinvestment.



Ximin "Shelley" Piao, Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning graduate student, discusses rural Opportunity Zone plans with Bill Blessman, Mason County Administrator, Brenda Stadsholt, Havana Mayor, and Casey Peterson, GPEDC.

Photo by Wendy Martin, The Democrat Newspapers



NUTRITION & WELLNESS

EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (EFNEP)

In Peoria and Tazewell counties, EFNEP staff members serve limited-resource families through nutrition and cooking classes, interactive displays, and online resources. We provide

knowledge and teach skills to help our clients eat more nutritious meals, spend food budgets more effectively, and be more physically active in their daily lives.



 **6,361**
Participants

1,160 EFNEP

59% youth 41% adults

5,201 SNAP-Ed

99% youth 1% adults

 **187**
Partners

78 EFNEP

109 SNAP-Ed

 **Race**

	EFNEP	SNAP-Ed
White	58%	62%
Black	38%	36%
Other	4%	2%

 **Ethnicity**

Identified as Hispanic

27% EFNEP

3% SNAP-Ed

GRANDPARENTS DEVELOP NEW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

One of the groups EFNEP staff have positively impacted is the grandparents group that meets at Peoria Friendship House. "It is especially meaningful to me to be able to help the grandparents who are dealing with health issues like diabetes or high blood pressure," explained Angela Jimenez, EFNEP instructor.

Prior to shelter-in-place guidelines, Angela was teaching weekly nutrition, cooking, and fitness lessons. In addition to the EFNEP lessons, the participants enjoyed spending time with other adults who are also raising

their grandchildren.

"Even though many of them have been cooking their entire lives, they were used to doing it by instinct," Angela explained. "I teach them how to measure properly and pay attention to food labels. Those things are important to help control extra salt and sugar and cook healthier."

One of the group's favorite ways to add exercise into their day is by dancing. They say it gives them more energy and increases their heart rate.

EFNEP STAFF KEEP FITNESS FUN

Exercise is an important piece of the health and wellness education that EFNEP staff provide to youth and adults. As lessons transitioned to online in 2020, EFNEP staff worked to maintain a sense of excitement about exercise and made sure both EFNEP staff and clients kept moving.

Mari Lopez, EFNEP instructor, became the unofficial fitness cheerleader for the unit team. The EFNEP staff co-teach the virtual lessons with the others

leading the ice breaker, nutrition lesson, food demo, and Q & A.

"I like to make our exercise lessons fun with my music and energy," Mari mentioned. "I give pep-talks and look up new and fun exercise videos online. I really like Fausto Murillo."

With more than normal computer time, exercise is even more important for both the staff and clients. Mari adapts the exercise to each audience but especially likes cardio and stretching.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson

Local Emergency Food System Strengthened Through New Food Pantry Network - Heart of Illinois

With a mission to support, connect, and provide resources to those working within the emergency food system, SNAP-Education and the Tazewell County Health Department partnered to launch Food Pantry Network-HOI (FPN-HOI) in March 2019. Since then, the network of food banks, food pantries, and local organizations has come together to focus efforts and to support one another as they work to alleviate hunger and build a healthier community.

Through the Food Pantry Network, systematic changes have happened that help pantries share resources and communicate with one another as well as both local food banks: Midwest Food Bank and Peoria Area Food Bank.

Education and Networking

The group has established online networking platforms

and bi-monthly meetings to address educational topics, discuss current issues pantries are facing, and provide time for general networking.

"When social distancing and shelter-in-place recommendations came into play, food pantries had to quickly shift their processes as the need increased. Thankfully the Food Pantry Network was well established and able to quickly reach people online and provide a route to connect those in need with food and necessary resources."

- Rebecca Crumrine, SNAP-Ed Coordinator

Referrals

Requests for food delivery to both quarantined families and vulnerable populations is a continuous need in our community. Referral requests for area residents in need are

completed in days, sometimes hours, thanks to the well established and responsive network.

Recently, FPN-HOI connected with All Our Kids Network to become a new partner with a web-based, bi-directional referral communication tool called Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS). It provides a way to complete the referral process to families from a multitude of community services. By utilizing this new resource, FPN-HOI will reach even more families.

"Before IRIS, referrals mainly came from those who were familiar with us," stated Rebecca. "Now, any agency in IRIS, whether or not they are familiar with who we are, can see there is a referral agency available to connect people to food."



Provided photo

"My name is Sophia Cheung, and I am a master's student and dietetic intern at Bradley University. I had the great opportunity to spend two weeks working with the EFNEP staff. I learned some valuable lessons that I will take into my career and I am grateful to have worked with the wonderful ladies at EFNEP."

One lesson I learned was "teaching with conversation" taught by Margaret Cover. I always thought that the point of presentations was to pass along information. However, I learned what's more important is listening. It doesn't matter how much information I put forth if I don't connect with the audience.

Another take away for me is that teamwork plays a huge role in everyone's success.

I thoroughly enjoyed hearing the stories of the staff working with the community, their challenges, and how they overcame them. I feel the EFNEP program benefits the Peoria and Tazewell communities through the efforts of this team and that future dietetic interns may gain the same valuable experiences as I did."

Excerpts from a letter written by one of the 9 Bradley interns who studied under EFNEP staff during Fall 2020 semester.

New Leaf: Longtime EFNEP Partner Welcomes Virtual Lessons

Since 1993, EFNEP staff have been teaching health and wellness lessons to the women receiving treatment at New Leaf, a substance abuse center in Peoria.

"Thanks to this strong long-standing working relationship we were able to keep working with New Leaf virtually," stated Margaret Cover, EFNEP educator. "In late July our staff started to team-teach virtual lessons every Friday. We have taught 307 participants there during the last four months."

The hour-long, online session includes a quiz or ice breaker, nutrition lesson, food demonstration, question and answer period, and exercise.

"The virtual lessons have really worked out well."

- Rachael Alexander-Walker, New Leaf Recovery Specialist

The hands-on cooking lessons are a class favorite that is missed by the virtual class participants.

"One week Jo Elyn demonstrated peanut butter pumpkin dip and the group wanted to make it so badly that we delivered supplies to them that afternoon so they could make the recipe," Margaret said.

Rachael Alexander-Walker, New Leaf Recovery Specialist, has passed on words of encouragement to the EFNEP team multiple times.

"I thought today's lecture was fun. Thank you so much."

"Wanted to let you know that I am really enjoying what a good job you guys are doing!"



Pumpkin Peanut Butter Dip

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup canned pumpkin puree
- 3/4 cup peanut butter
- 1 - 2 Tbsp. brown sugar to taste
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

PREPARATION

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Mix peanut butter and brown sugar.
3. Add vanilla and stir.
4. Add pumpkin and stir until well blended.
5. Refrigerate or serve immediately with graham crackers, apple slices, or celery sticks.

Nutrition facts available on eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu

Photo provided by Illinois Nutrition Education Program team

Mobile Food Pantries Help Fill the Gap

With the ever-changing climate and mitigation guidelines, food pantry volunteers were challenged in 2020 to change operations. Through the Food Pantry Network, our SNAP-Ed staff worked with Tazewell County Health Department, Peoria Area Food Bank, and Midwest Food Bank to help connect communities with mobile pantries in neighborhoods where resources were desperately needed.

From June to November, eight mobile pantries were offered in Mackinaw, Creve Coeur, Pekin, Delavan, East Peoria, and the Peoria East Bluff neighborhood.

Wilson Intermediate School in Pekin was the site of the inaugural mobile pantry. Peoria Area Food Bank Manager Wayne Cannon estimated that 7,000 pounds of food were available for distribution, including 250 prepared meals, 250 boxes of ingredients for preparing meals

at home, and 500 gallons of milk donated by Prairie Farms.

The remaining mobile food pantries partners included Mackinaw Emergency Management Agency, Delavan United Methodist Church, Heartland Health Services, Goodwill, Hult Health Center, Peoria Police, War Room Ministries, Wilson School (Pekin), LaSalle School (Creve Coeur), Pekin Housing Authority, and East Peoria Central Junior High School. A total of 1,536 prepared food boxes were distributed to families in need along with fresh produce, miscellaneous food items, household, and personal supplies.

“These have been a successful way to fill a gap in our local emergency food needs,” stated Kaitlyn Streitmatter, SNAP-Ed educator. “We have also seen local food pantries take it a step further and use the same model for a contactless food drive.”



Photo by Midwest Food Bank

PARTNERSHIP ENABLES FOOD BOX HOME DELIVERIES

In late March, with the collaboration of SNAP-Ed, 211 United Way, Midwest Food Bank, and Tazewell County Health Department, 92 families impacting 356 individuals had food boxes delivered directly to their homes. SNAP-Ed helped to provide food bundle guides, recipes, and Extension COVID-19 resources in each box. Additionally, the Food Pantry Network that is run by the SNAP-Ed Policy, Systems, and Environment (PSE) team was used to help provide food and connect volunteers with those in need. 83 volunteers were recruited and worked on this project!



1,536 boxes of food were distributed at eight mobile food pantries held in Mackinaw, Creve Coeur, Pekin, Delavan, East Peoria, and Peoria.

Photo by Anita Wilkinson





SNAP-Ed Works with Partners to Increase Healthy Options at Pantries

Food plays a substantial role in health, and impacts whether or not people are able to lead an active, healthy life. By working with multiple coalitions, University of Illinois Extension staff Kaitlyn Streitmatter and Rebecca Crumrine are making substantial improvements in the food options available to people in need. They have played important roles in mobile food pantries, preferred food drives,

- ▶ *Nutrition education to food pantry volunteers and clients*
- ▶ *Greenlight identification and labeling system to improve awareness of healthier foods being offered*
- ▶ *Preferred food drives to collect healthy food donations*
- ▶ *Mobile food pantries*

and increased involvement in the greenlight identification and labeling system used at food pantries and food banks.

“Communities with higher rates of food insecurity have been shown to have increased rates of diet-related chronic diseases when compared to national rates,” commented Streitmatter, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education (SNAP-Ed) educator. “Research shows chronic diseases such as diabetes or heart disease are the cause for 7 out of 10 deaths in the U.S., and that 66% of families using food pantries for support have to choose between medical needs and purchasing food. We work to better understand this challenge and aim to increase the availability of healthy food to local emergency food partners.”

As members of the HEAL Food System Partners, Streitmatter and Crumrine, SNAP-Ed program coordinator, have played significant roles in the “Greenlight Project.” The project’s aim is to improve the awareness of healthier foods offered to community members who use food pantries by applying a greenlight identification and

labeling system at both the food pantry and food bank level. Additionally, nutrition expertise and resources are provided and include food pantry staff training, coordination of preferred food drives, healthy messaging prompts, and recipe cards.

“It is challenging for food pantries to encourage healthier foods because much of their inventory depends on donations. Preferred food drives, healthy bundle boxes, and fresh food drives are a great way for food pantries to ask for donations that are most needed,” stated Streitmatter. “We have assisted pantries in marketing and organizing preferred food drives in addition to working with community organizations, food banks, and food pantries to hold mobile food pantry distributions. The connections we have developed through HEAL and FPN-HOI have been instrumental in allowing these additional opportunities to happen.”

By using research-based methods to educate food pantry guests on healthier food choices, we hope to help make the healthy choice the easy choice.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson

Stethoscope Aids SNAP-Ed Lessons in a Unique Way

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year Julie Dantone, SNAP-Ed instructor, was presented with a unique challenge as she was kicking off the Organ Wise Guys curriculum at Dirksen Primary School in Pekin. How do you teach a child to check their pulse when the child does not have any arms?

"In Organ Wise Guys we teach how to make healthy food choices, the importance of exercise, and drinking plenty of water. One of the favorite stories is about 'Hearty Heart.' After exercising we learn how to find our pulse and see how much faster our heart is beating."

- Julie Dantone, SNAP-Ed Instructor

Among the six different classrooms in which Julie teaches at Dirksen, one student was born without limbs. From Julie's perspective that didn't slow

him down or deter him from participating in the lessons. His perseverance and positive attitude drove Julie to go the extra mile to come up with an alternative way to teach the activity of taking your pulse.

"This was a unique situation for me and all of my colleagues I spoke with about it," continued Julie. "I came up with the idea of using a stethoscope and worked my way through the process to have this new approach approved to supplement my lessons. It has been more successful than I ever imagined."

By the second monthly visit to Dirksen, Julie had a stethoscope in her Organ Wise Guys kit and was excited to help her happy, little guy try it out. His classmates got excited and asked to try it too. Now the tool has become an added feature to all of Julie's Organ Wise Guys

exercise lessons, and students throughout Tazewell County have doubled their hands-on learning about their pulse rates by both feeling it and hearing it.

The stethoscope has been a huge hit for all the students no matter what their abilities are. This is a wonderful example of the special efforts our SNAP-Ed instructors make to help all of their students learn more about healthy foods and healthy living.

According to the Organ Wise Guys website, participants are shown to have statistically significant improvements in body mass index percentile, blood pressure, as well as higher standardized test scores, compared to children that don't have this curriculum. The children learn about nutrition and health in fun and creative ways that help them retain the information. This helps the children take better care of their bodies and reduce obesity and other related diseases.

— HORTICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES —

LOCAL OPAL WEBSITE

Master Naturalist Julie Robinson created a website to help everyone easily find locations and details of public outdoor areas as a way to encourage people to spend more time outdoors.

localopal.org



Photo by Anita Wilkinson



232

Master Volunteers

152 Master Gardeners
80 Master Naturalists



7,400 hours

volunteering reported

4,300 Master Gardeners
3,100 Master Naturalists



3,300 hours

continuing education

2,100 Master Gardeners
1,200 Master Naturalists



\$186,000

value to communities

\$108,000 Master Gardeners
\$78,000 Master Naturalists

Website Encourages Us to Go Outside

"I just want people to spend more time outside," explained University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Julie Robinson.

This was the passion driving Robinson to build a website called Local OPAL, which stands for Outdoor Playing And Learning.

It helps everyone easily find publicly accessible outdoor locations in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell, Marshall, and Woodford counties.

to go," she explained.

Part of Julie's inspiration came from the fact that the local EMN training is coordinated in such a way that introduces trainees to natural areas that may be new to them and are typically lesser-known in general. Places like

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy Emiquon, McNaughton Park, and Camp Wokanda are a few that EMNs enjoy during their training.

"Time in the Extension Master Naturalist (EMN) class convinced me that, as a community, we needed a way for ALL our local outdoor public access areas and information about them to be more easily found. We all need to know what is in our backyard."

-Julie Robinson, EMN

In 2018, Robinson started working on the website. As a former high school math teacher, she has first-hand experience with the challenges of spending too much time inside. "I always encouraged my students to go outside, take a hike, but they often said there is nowhere

many, Robinson has identified almost 300 local natural areas, noted their exact location, and documented details about each one. The website is a work in progress as new details are added and areas updated.

State Master Gardener Awards

Volunteers of Extension's Master Gardener program were recognized at a virtual awards ceremony on October 2. Honored with the Outstanding State Master Gardener award were **Kathy Baker** of Green Valley, **Janine Donahue** of Morton, **Christine Grafelman** of Hanna City, **Randy Huber** of Edwards, **Cathy Lane** of East Peoria, **Sue Walters** of Canton, and **Trudy Yazujian** of Washington.

A Sustained Excellence Award was given to **Kathleen McLaughlin** of Mapleton who received the Outstanding Award in 2018.

A team of Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists were honored with a Teamwork Award for their project at Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center. That team includes **May Bach** of Hanna City, **Julie Dantone** of Peoria, **Ellen Lorentz** of Morton,

Lynn Moon of Trivoli, **Karen Pasko** of London Mills, **Karl Stach** of Hanna City, **Anthony Tiraboschi** of Peoria, **Laura Bradshaw** of East Peoria, and **Denise Madigan** of Chillicothe.

Across the state, only 1% to 2% of active Master Gardeners are recognized annually. In our unit 10% were honored this year, demonstrating the quality of our volunteers and projects.

"We are so honored to have had so many of our local Master Gardeners recognized at the state level," mentioned Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, Extension horticulture educator serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties.

"The work they do locally makes a positive impact on our communities and citizens but also inspires volunteers throughout the state to start similar projects in their areas."



The Mushrooms of Illinois webinar reached over 150 guests during the live session, and in the first seven months, the video recording had 2,300 views.

Dr. Andrew Miller presented on the major groups of macrofungi including several edible and poisonous mushrooms. Miller is a research professor and the Director of the Herbarium at the Illinois Natural History Survey at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and a native of Illinois.

Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, horticulture educator reported a survey sent to both webinar participants and available to video viewers showed 14% were from the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit, 84% lived in Illinois but outside the four-county unit, and 2% lived outside Illinois. Of those, 64% were Extension Master Gardeners or Naturalists, 11% were associated with a nature preserve, 20% were members of the Illinois Forestry Association or Illinois Mycological Association, and 5% were listening as part of a university class.

go.illinois.edu/mushroomrecording



Cathy Lane is one of 17 local Master Volunteers recognized at the state level for her volunteer contributions.

Photo by Anita Wilkinson



4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

JR. SUPERINTENDENTS

Peoria 4-H Junior Superintendents provide valuable support to the 4-H Show as they develop leadership skills. Many of the teens who took on this leadership role in 2019 (right) adapted to the changes of the 2020 Virtual 4-H Show and developed new, creative ways to assist and encourage.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson



3,006

Youth Reached

1,158 in 4-H Clubs
800 in Extended Programs
464 in One-day Programs
584 in Short Programs



55

Programs

34 Extended Programs
2 One-day Programs
19 Short Programs



87

Clubs

46 Multi-project Clubs
23 Special Interest Clubs
18 Cloverbud Clubs



450

Adult Volunteers

107 Club Leaders
44 SPIN Club Leaders
33 Cloverbud Leaders
56 Fair Superintendents
210 Program Volunteers

Teens Help Boost Virtual 4-H Show Involvement

Peoria County 4-H members look forward to the day they are old enough to become a Junior Superintendent at the 4-H Show.

This volunteer role holds a special place of honor for a small group of teens each year. While their responsibilities looked very different for the 2020 Virtual 4-H Show, the Junior Superintendents played an integral part in the success of the show.

Jr. Superintendents and 4-H Federation members worked together to plan and create a fair project tour video with the purpose to inspire other members to exhibit virtually. The video posted on the Peoria 4-H Facebook page had over 2,000 views with another 100 views on YouTube. It not only inspired other 4-H members but promoted 4-H to the public.

Additionally, the Jr. Superintendents personally contacted every 4-H family to offer encouragement and

assistance with completing the online 4-H project exhibit process.

Their leadership efforts paid off. Peoria County had 95 youth enter a total of 431 exhibits, which is an average of 4.5 exhibits per youth. In the Fulton-Mason-

Peoria-Tazewell Unit, the average was 3.3 exhibits per youth.

Federation president and Jr. Superintendent Sarah Stevens stated it was rewarding to know she had made a difference. Sarah received several reply emails from members and parents letting her know her personal contact was just the encouragement they needed to complete their projects.

"Providing leadership while adapting to changes that are out of our control is an important life skill the teen 4-H members gained through this unusual 4-H fair experience."

-Cathy Ludolph, 4-H Coordinator



Photo provided by Caleb B.'s Family

Positive Youth Development Continues Through Virtual 4-H Shows

Local 4-Hers did not let the cancellation of the regular 4-H Shows stop them from exhibiting their 4-H projects with the same pride and skill development as they have shown in the past. Thanks to the hard work, creative thinking, and ingenuity of the 4-H staff, 327 youth participated in the 2020 4-H Virtual Shows in our unit.

As 4-H staff worked to transition to an online 4-H Show, their priority remained to provide youth with positive youth development experiences. The online exhibit platform provided youth the opportunity and encouragement to prepare their 4-H exhibits and work with their animals to get them "show-ready."

In exchange for face-to-face exhibiting and conference

judging, 4-Hers photographed or recorded videos of their exhibits and wrote answers to typical conference judging questions. Unit-wide, 88 volunteer judges evaluated 1,090 exhibits online and provided feedback to the exhibitors. In doing so, they selected 187 State Fair winners, 110 State Fair alternates, and 192 additional award winners, such as class champions and best of show.

"As much as I miss the kids and in-person judging, I feel like I was able to take more time to give more advice and praise in my comments this year," mentioned Tori Smith, Tazewell photography judge.

Two judges in Tazewell and Peoria counties also piloted a virtual conference judging experience with one photography class and

two communication classes. After the regular evaluation process was completed, youth were invited to meet with the judge via Zoom to have a conversation about their exhibit and specific project skills. Six youth took advantage of the optional opportunity.

In a post-show survey, 91% of respondents indicated that, in the absence of an in-person event, the virtual show was a good option. An additional 4% even preferred this to the typical in-person event. "I'm glad we still have the opportunity to learn and show new skills and receive feedback from experts," noted one participant.

The 4-H Virtual Shows provided an avenue for mastery of skills, leadership development, problem-solving, and some memorable family time.

STEAM Activity and Career Exploration Videos Educate and Connect with Youth

4-H staff developed three video series for youth: STEAM Activities, Storybook Engineering, and Meet a STEAM Professional.

STEAM Activity & Storybook Engineering Videos

A series of short, educational videos, focused on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM)

activities were created to be done at home.

Lessons included topics such as design thinking, acids and bases, and clouds—just to name a few.

An additional series of six videos focused on Storybook Engineering.

These videos tied concepts about a simple machine, such as a wedge,

wheel and axle, or lever to a children's story. The videos have been used by individuals, youth-serving agencies, libraries, and 4-H clubs and received over 320 views in the first three months posted.

Meet a STEAM Professional Online Program

This five-session Zoom series introduced middle schoolers to a variety of local STEAM professionals. Guest speakers included: Shannon Egli from JUMP Simulation (anatomy), Mary Jo Papich from Jazz Education

Network (music), Ursula Towne and Thuong Le from Caterpillar and Society of Women Engineers (engineering), Adrienne Bauer from Wildlife Prairie Park (animals), Jenn Gordon from Arts Partners (arts), and Erica Goett, Kristin Duffield and Kylie Hampton from the National Center for Agricultural Utilization

Research (insects). Presenters shared about their career path, their daily work, and did a fun demonstration or experiment. These sessions were recorded and continue to be accessed and provide education.

At the completion of the series, evaluations

were sent to 62 registered participants. Of those that responded, 100% said they learned something new about STEAM. 100% of respondents reported they learned things to help them achieve their goals, they are excited to take more STEAM classes in school, and they learned things to help them prepare for their future careers. Participants also shared that getting to see what professionals do in their jobs and learning about different careers were some of the most beneficial parts of the program.

"Thanks so much for creating these STEAM videos and activities. I'm so excited that now we will still be able to offer STEAM programs in July to our patrons despite the shift to virtual programming. Thank you SO MUCH. These are fantastic."

- Amy Edgar, Dunlap Library Youth Services Librarian



4-H Provides Teachers with Positive Youth Development Skills & Resources, Virtually

Extension 4-H educators Judy Schmidt and Emily Schoenfelder generally work within the sphere of non-formal education. However, anticipating the pivots that would be needed in 2020, these youth development professionals offered training sessions geared towards classroom teachers in a special summer edition of the Teacher Tuesdays program.

- ▶ Over 165 individuals registered to join the trainings live and the recordings have reached an additional 70 people online.
- ▶ Series focused on STEM careers, developmental relationships, and science inquiry.
- ▶ 100% of survey respondents indicated that they intended to take new knowledge and apply it to their classroom.
- ▶ 95% said the content was relevant to their professional role.
- ▶ 100% indicated the sessions were engaging, the presenters were knowledgeable, and the content was presented at an appropriate level.

4-H Federation Community Service Projects

MASON FEDERATION GIFTS TO AG INDUSTRY

Local 4-H members showed their thanks to area farmers in a big way in December 2019. The gift looked small but in reality, it came with a life-saving message.

Mason County 4-H Federation members partnered with the Mason County Farm Bureau on a holiday community service project. The 4-H members wanted to thank farmers and those in the agricultural industry workforce for all they do to help feed the world. They also wanted to use the opportunity to share an important message from the Illinois Farm Bureau to help anyone struggling with daily stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, or other mental health challenges.

The 4-H Federation members handed out gifts to truck drivers and farmers who were hauling in loads of grain to the Havana ADM facility. The snowman-themed, wrapped gifts consisted of candy and snacks along with a pair of gloves, which were donated by the Havana Farm & Home Supply. Attached to each wrapped package was a card from the Mason County Farm Bureau titled "Stronger Together". Inside the card, the recipient found information on crisis signs and symptoms, and resource information to seek in a time of mental or emotional health crisis.

The 4-H Federation members handed out 136 gifts to truck drivers and farmers.

FULTON FEDERATION CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

An annual service project for Fulton Federation is to sew Christmas stockings and write messages in Christmas cards to send to the troops through Operation Santa. In February 2020, the teens gathered to sew 37 stockings and write a few dozen cards. Every year the project develops new skills and builds camaraderie and responsibility in the youth.

PEORIA FEDERATION ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ALL VIDEO

Recognizing the importance of staying connected to others in 2020, Peoria Federation produced the "Encouragement for All" video. It has been viewed by over 1,000 individuals online. They say "Thank you to everyone who is working hard to keep us safe, and who teach us from afar, encourage us when we need it most and have instilled in us the virtues of the 4-H pledge."

TAZEWELL FEDERATION ASSISTED LIVING CARDS

In April, twelve members of Tazewell 4-H Federation made cards and wrote letters to the 69 residents of Apostolic Christian LifePoints in Morton. The teens wanted to help residents feel less socially isolated. 4-H volunteer and mom, Pam Chism works at LifePoints and delivered the cards. She said the cards and notes instantly brought smiles to the residents.



Lewistown farmer Robert Weaver was one of 136 farmers who received a gift from Mason 4-H Federation as a way to say thank you and share an important message.

Photo by Joli Pierson



PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS

Peoria Zoo

The Peoria Zoo is operated by the Peoria Park District (PPD), one of the largest public parks in the entire nation relative to its population. Extension has long had a partnership with the PPD, and our master volunteers have served as docents, trail clearers, children's events supporters, and in many other roles.

The Peoria Zoo is the newest area of the PPD to be added to the Extension partnership list.

Extension Master Naturalist Tom Menger currently serves on the Board of the Zoological Society. At the end of 2019, Tom was excited to initiate this new partnership.

"We felt the zoo would be a place that can display the work of Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, while the work of the Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists can help improve the zoo as well," Tom mentioned.

In addition to the animals, education and conservation are important parts of the zoo's mission.

"Our November 2019 quarterly meeting was hosted by the zoo," explained Christine Belless, natural resources coordinator. "They taught us about the amazing conservation efforts they are doing to protect the Alligator Snapping Turtle and Mexican Wolf."



PEORIA ZOO PARTNERSHIP

Extension Master Gardeners (EMG) showed up on two chilly days in March at the Peoria Zoo to begin work on the new demonstration and educational pollinator garden. A portion of the volunteers are pictured above with Zoo Director Yvonne Strode.

The presentation sparked a huge interest in EMNs getting more involved with the conservation efforts at the zoo and being trained as docents.

The partnership continued to grow with a pollinator garden project. "The zoo wanted to turn an area into a pollinator pocket," Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, horticulture educator said. "Our Master Gardener trainees have taken on this task and are currently creating a beautiful pollinator garden in the zoo to be used as a demonstration and education garden."



ART, Inc. - Artists Reenvisioning Tomorrow

The Romain Arts & Culture Community Center purchased the Greeley School building, located in downtown Peoria in July 2018. A few months later Extension Master Gardeners began assisting with the Lettuce Share Romain community garden. This year the EMGs have entered 300 volunteer hours on that project.

This year, we were happy to begin working with ART Inc. in the world of youth development. 4-H staff have provided:

- Professional development for the ART Inc. after-school staff
- STEAM after school programs (in person and then later online)
- Assistance with incorporating STEM into their KidTastic kits

Havana Early Childhood Pre-K & P.I. Program

When Skye Mibbs joined the Extension SNAP-Ed team in 2019 she made connections with the Havana Early Childhood Pre-K and Preventative Initiative program located at Havana Jr. High School. The program serves pregnant women and mothers with children ages newborn to five. They use a variety of approaches in order to nurture healthy parent-child

relationships and positively impact child development.

The program offers many things such as weekly home visits, monthly newsletters, family events, coffee clubs, playgroups, field trips, health and developmental screening, free books, and community agency referrals. They invited SNAP-Ed to present monthly at their educational parent meetings.



Morton Economic Development Council

"The Morton Economic Development Council exists to positively shape the future of Morton," states their website.

Illinois Extension has been able to support the Morton EDC mission through community and economic development projects that are part of the campus faculty and student engagement in our unit. Morton EDC 2020 partnership projects with Extension included:

- ▶ eCommerce Distribution Center - explored the feasibility of creating an e-commerce distribution center for small businesses
- ▶ Housing Study - graduate student capstone project that resulted in a new housing model for the city
- ▶ Equitable Green Infrastructure Study - addressed challenges associated with stormwater infrastructure

First Baptist Church Food Pantry in Canton

Even though we have been partnering with the First Baptist Church Food Pantry in Canton for a few years, there have been some big changes and additions that make it feel new. SNAP-Ed instructor Krista Gray had developed a great partnership with the food pantry by providing nutrition education and food samples at her EAT.MOVE.SAVE. booths. In the Fall of 2019, Krista introduced new pantry manager Julie Henderson to SNAP-Ed

educator Kaitlyn Streitmatter and program coordinator Rebecca Crumrine. The trio worked together to convert the former pantry set up into a shopping pantry that includes a waiting area with resource tables and space to offer health screenings. The new set up helps better meet the guests' needs, reduces overhead and food waste while allowing for educational signs that help encourage guests to select healthier items.



Julie Henderson became the food pantry manager at First Baptist Church in Canton and worked with SNAP-Ed staff to redesign the pantry setup.

Photo by Rebecca Crumrine



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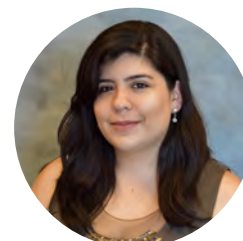
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3 years



Cheryl Russell
EFNEP Instructor
19 years

RETIRED FROM EXTENSION IN 2020



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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.

The Illinois Nutrition Education Programs are funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture by the Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and University of Illinois.