



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

We are delighted to bring the research and innovation of University of Illinois, in a practical and usable form, to the citizens of Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties, and beyond. Illinois Extension educators live and work in your communities, forming strong partnerships with local leaders, businesses, schools, and residents in order to solve problems together. Through research-based education, individuals have opportunities to improve their finances, live healthier lives, raise resilient families, enjoy and protect natural areas, and have more productive farms.

This year has been challenging, but those trials produced innovation and made us stronger as an organization. Like most everyone, Extension offices went remote in March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff quickly and successfully pivoted to digital platforms and are now reaching more people than ever before. Our mission to offer education that is relevant and accessible continues to be our number one goal. Our programs reach all ages and backgrounds.

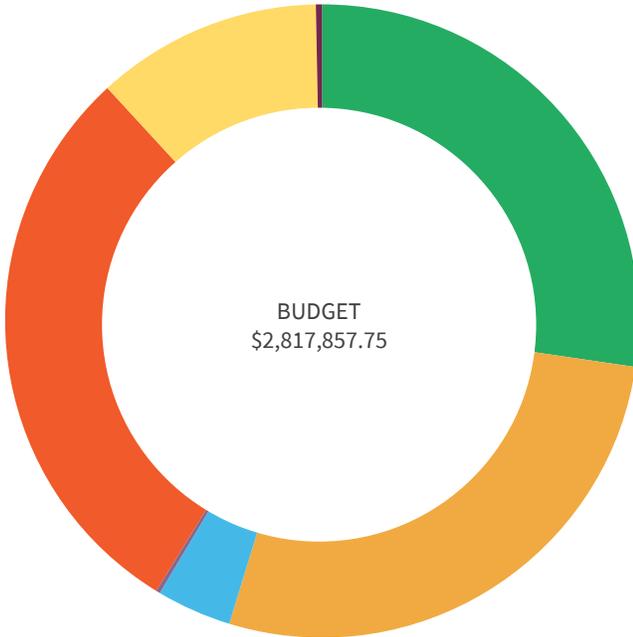
We are proud to have the opportunity to provide positive change in our community and we thank you for the support you have provided to our organization. Together, we can continue to make a positive difference for those we serve, while extending knowledge and changing lives.

Ginger Boas
County Extension Director



Financial Report

Illinois Extension serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties receives funding from the local level, including from county boards, as well as from state match. Our staff have also been able to secure grants and gifts that help us flourish from year to year.



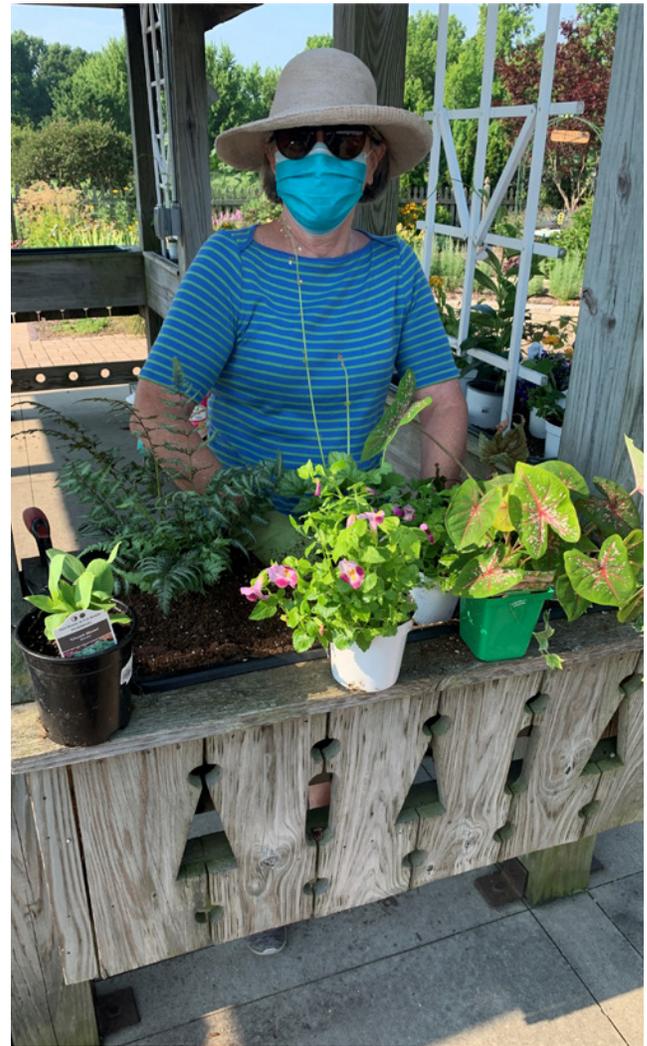
- \$769,846.55 Local Funds
- 772,343.00 County Board Match
- 107,756.00 General Revenue Funds
- 5,848.69 Gift Funds
- 828,330.51 Grants
- 325,000.00 Smith-Lever (Federal)
- 8,733.00 Youth Development

4-H Focus

The 4-H Focus video series was created to showcase the local 4-H program to the public. Through interviews conducted via Zoom, viewers are introduced to area 4-H members, club leaders, alumni, and supporters. Interviewees share their 4-H story, including memories, experiences, and successes. There has been a positive response to the videos and it has helped increase our social media presence.



Angie Barnard, director of Illinois 4-H Foundation and 4-H alumni, was interviewed by Jen Odle, 4-H program coordinator.



Champaign County Master Gardener Dottie Davito plants containers in the Idea Garden in Urbana. The planters in the gazebo demonstrate container design elements that can be replicated at home.

By the Numbers: Extending Knowledge, Changing Lives in 2020

An average of 200 educational webinars were held and some of them were uploaded to YouTube for public access.



90,000+
People Reached



Visit our YouTube unit channel
go.illinois.edu/YouTubeChannelUnit13



Family Life

Family Life focuses on healthy living across the lifespan by delivering research-informed programs that address issues important to individuals, families, and professionals who provide care and services to them. Extension programs can help parents, adult children, and older adults find solutions to life's challenges.

For Chelsey Byers, family life educator, the goal is for participants to learn strategies and adopt healthy behaviors to enhance their physical and emotional health, and the health of their families. The family life team did just that in mid-March, when their usual mode of operation changed. The team quickly planned, promoted, and delivered several educational series to reach individuals in our local communities and across the state.

The family life team is composed of five educators, plus a part-time family life coordinator, who contributes tremendously.

Following is a list of statewide, online series that have been offered since March (not including one-time programs for local entities):

Discover Wellness Series (6 sessions)
<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/discover-wellness>

Discover Brain Health Series (6 sessions)
<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/discover-brain-health>

Life's Moments (11 sessions)

Discover Healthy Aging Series (4 sessions)
<http://go.illinois.edu/discoverhealthyaging>

Discover Caregiving Relationships (6 sessions)
<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/caregiving-resources>

Life's Moments: From Memory to Legacy (8 sessions)



Byers' partnership with University of Illinois Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute has blossomed into a growing cooperative effort. In 2020, Extension collaboratively planned, implemented, and evaluated three educational series with IHSI:

Nutrition, Wellness, and the Brain (6 sessions)
<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/nutrition-wellness-and-brain>

Summer Self-Care Series (10 sessions)
<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/summer-self-care-series>

Autumn Health Picks (9 sessions)
<http://go.illinois.edu/healthpicks>

These three series, totaling 25 sessions, reached 4,314 participants. There were an average of 34 states in attendance and all 50 states participated in the Summer Self-Care series.

30% of registered participants were from Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties

2020 Family Life Highlights

-  **11,118**
Participants Reached in Family Life & IHSI Webinars
-  **408**
Individuals Received Weekly Extending Wellness Texts
-  **70+**
Educational Webinars Offered Since Mid-March
-  **56**
Local Businesses Subscribed to Breakroom Buzz Newsletter
-  **7**
Virtual Interns
-  extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/family-life



The Illinois Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program serves families in six counties, where there is the greatest need: Champaign, Cook, Madison, Peoria, St. Clair, and Vermilion. It targets adults, particularly with young children, to participate in a series of lessons covering nutrition, food budgeting, food preparation, and food safety.

This year, in-person classes had to be modified and presented virtually, due to the pandemic. Much of the summer was spent preparing community workers with the technology training needed to offer nutrition classes virtually. Even when they were unable to conduct face-to-face classes, EFNEP staff continued reaching out to partner agencies within the community, providing resources that they could share with their clientele, such as tips for stretching food dollars.

EFNEP is currently teaching classes remotely. In the fall, one participant expressed to a community worker that she did not realize she was over-feeding her child. After attending an online class, she is now able to give her child age-appropriate portion sizes. She also stated that she was incorporating more physical activity into her child's schedule.



EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Since 1969, EFNEP has provided nutrition education that works for families, improving their diet quality, food safety, and food purchasing habits. In Champaign and Vermilion counties, EFNEP staff members help limited-resource families to make the healthy choice, the easy choice, even on a budget.

EFNEP provides a deeper experience for those who participate in nutrition education programming, with regular support from and connection to the local EFNEP team. EFNEP helps limited-resource families gain the knowledge and skills needed to adopt a healthy diet and active lifestyle. Research-based programs engage learners in practical, hands-on lessons and activities. EFNEP classes are taught by peer educators, who are members of the communities in which they work. These team members are trained, passionate, and dedicated to serving a diverse population through nutrition education.

EFNEP Works

A gentleman in my classes at Rosecrance in Champaign thanked me for sharing recipes with vegetables. He said that he never ate vegetables because he didn't know how to cook them and didn't think he would like them. Now, he makes the recipes at home for his family.

JAIME HOLLAND, EFNEP WORK PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Our Community Partners



3
K-12 Schools



9
Agencies or Community Centers



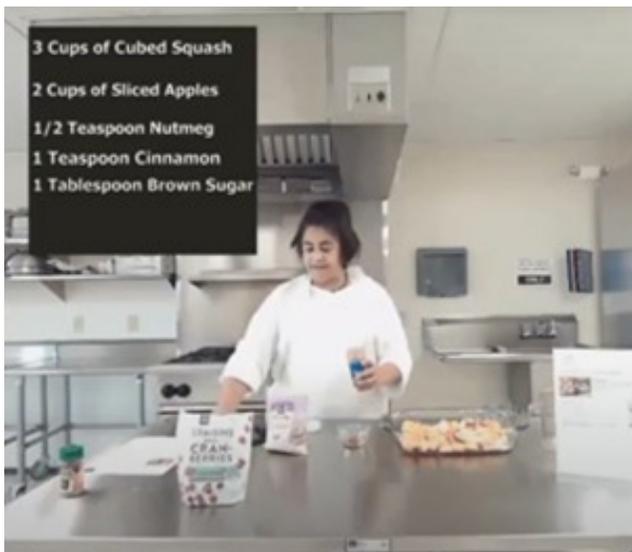
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Food Pantries and Food Banks



COVID-19 challenged partner agencies to change and the SNAP-Ed team had to change with them. Schools switched to remote learning and food pantries closed, had limited hours, or completely modified their distribution methods. SNAP-Ed staff adapted to the changes by learning new technologies to teach nutrition education classes online. The direct education team responded to agencies' needs, providing resources that were requested.

To support developing needs in the community, the statewide SNAP-Ed team launched the Find Food IL Community Food Map on the Eat.Move.Save. website. Find Food IL is an interactive map that helps users locate food resources in their community, including food pantries, farmers markets, and retail outlets that accept SNAP and/or WIC benefits. The local SNAP-Ed team worked to promote the Find Food IL Community Food Map to community partners. The team also identified additional food resources to put on the map, such as Little Free Pantries. Stephanie Acevedo, SNAP-Ed educator, along with two other Extension educators, conducted a statewide webinar demonstrating how to use the tool. The same webinar was also presented to a local coalition in Vermilion County.

SNAP-Ed provided local food pantries with signage to increase awareness and make it easier for clients to choose healthier food options. When many pantries had to switch to drive-through distribution for safety purposes, SNAP-Ed produced outdoor signage. The new signage not only promoted healthy options, but also helped many first-time clients identify the food pantries. Clients received nutrition information while waiting in pick-up lines and the signage contributed to a welcoming atmosphere.



Del Jacobs, SNAP-Ed community worker, gives a food demonstration to students at Urbana Middle School.



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

After shifting to virtual programs, we were still able to stay connected to Hope Center in Danville. We provided a virtual after school program using Zoom, and the children were engaged and participated just like in an in-person class! Hope Center passed out ingredients, and we made Tortilla Fruit Pizza together.

DEE HAUAN, SNAP-ED COMMUNITY WORKER

SNAP-Ed Community Partnerships

-  24 K-12 Schools
-  23 Early Childhood
-  20 Agencies or Community Centers
-  27 Emergency Food Sites



4-H Shows Go Virtual

Embodying the 4-H motto, “Learn by doing,” 4-H members, parents, and club leaders navigated new territory this summer as 4-H shows went virtual amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

All summer shows, including 4-H public presentations, general projects, and even livestock exhibits, were held virtually. This provided an opportunity for local 4-Hers to showcase their project mastery in an environment that was not only safe for the youth, but also the judges, volunteers, families, and staff, who all contributed to the experience.

As with anything new, there was a learning curve for all involved, but the local 4-H community worked together to make the virtual show a success. Staff facilitated virtual lunches with 4-H club leaders to help address questions and concerns about the new format. Naomi Dolan and Hannah Beck, Vermilion County 4-H Federation members, provided training on how to submit virtual entries and created short video tutorials that were available on the Virtual 4-H Show webpage, created by staff to support 4-H families and volunteers, and keep them informed as processes evolved.

Over 1,000 blue ribbons, 20 best in show ribbons, 46 grand champion rosettes, and more than 300 champion and reserve champion designations were awarded to youth projects! Over 160 county-level 4-H projects advanced to the Illinois 4-H Virtual State Fair.



4-Hers show their summer projects: (top left) Bailey Bunting, Ford, scrapbooking; (top right) Nathaniel Wiesbrook, Champaign, woodworking; (bottom left) Braylon Porter, Iroquois, sheep; (bottom right) Drew Hayes, Vermilion, dog obedience.



Youth showed their creativity, making their own monster from provided supplies. They also explored different visual art mediums, which helped bring their creations to life.

Find Your Spark in 4-H

New and prospective 4-H members from the four-county region participated in a virtual workshop series aimed at increasing awareness of different project areas, in addition to helping youth stay connected during a time of isolation and social distancing. More than 70 youth registered for the six-week program, a joint effort among 21 counties in Illinois, which met weekly via Zoom. Participants received supplies for the hands-on-activities, which included using chopsticks, creating a picture that lights up, and sprouting seeds in a self-watering planter. Cultural diversity, electricity, horticulture, physical fitness, animal sciences, and visual arts were all highlighted during the program.

Serving Youth in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion Counties

Program Reach



110 Clubs



1,196 Club Members



177 Adult Club Volunteers



107 Youth Club Volunteers



extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/4-h-youth-development



Illinois students working on a terrarium garden kit during fall 2020 move in week. The students joined a video chat with Extension Educator Erin Harper, who walked them through creating “Mini Jurassic Gardens” to bring some green into their new homes.

COVID-19 elevated a growing mental health crisis in our country and people sought comfort and escape in their own backyards, neighborhoods, local parks, and green spaces. 2020 saw a 40% increase in home gardening. Extension helped homeowners and communities create sustainable gardens and landscapes, providing beauty, food access, and property enhancements.

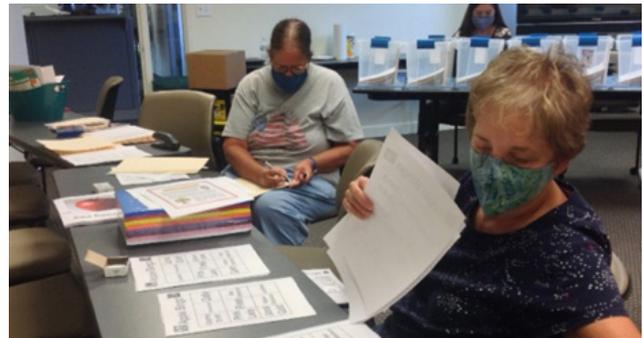
Connectedness and Inclusion
Virtual Programming

Social distancing made it more difficult to find moments of human connection and to maintain a sense of community. The horticulture team created virtual spaces where volunteers could share ideas and support one another. They shared what was happening in their gardens, attended weekly video chat tea times and coffee hours, and participated in technology training so they could continue providing education to the community.

Champaign County Master Gardeners reached 109,604 people through their educational social media posts. The agriculture and natural resources team held 40 virtual events and webinars, reaching over 3,758 people in all 50 states. These included virtual tree walks and Live with a Horticulturist, featuring Extension Educator Ryan Pankau.

Garden Kits

Vermilion County Master Gardeners regularly deliver three or more Educational Horticulture Therapy programs per month to veterans who are residents in palliative care, psych therapy treatment, and assisted living at the Illiana VA in Danville. When the VA was put on lockdown due to the flu and then COVID, Master Gardeners came up with ways to continue delivering programs, with VA therapists helping to make modifications for adults with special needs. They created kits for each of the topics typically covered during in-person programming, including trivia, bingo, crossword puzzles, and hands-on activities like apple printing, pumpkin painting, terrarium kits, and holiday center pieces.



Vermilion County Master Gardener volunteers Cathy Bolser and Debbie Edwards assemble garden kits with Extension Educator Erin Harper for veterans living at Illiana VA in Danville. The theme for October was apples!

The veterans were not the only people to benefit from garden kits. Master Gardener volunteers, who regularly deliver programming at libraries and schools, also created garden kits for libraries, students living in dorms on campus, and for youth experiencing virtual learning. Over 500 kits were dispersed from September to December with plans for many more in the coming year.

Program Reach



1,431 Educational Contacts
Participants in All Programs Last Year



45 Educational Events
Educational Sessions Offered Last Year



21 Webinars
Digital Learning Events Last Year



336 Trained Volunteers
Total Master Gardener Volunteers



\$284,836 Volunteer Value
Value of Services Performed by Volunteers



Environment and Energy

The natural wonder of Illinois is more than just its beautiful scenery. The land provides recreation for people, habitat for pollinators and wildlife, pasture for grazing livestock, water for communities, and fields for growing food. People everywhere enjoy improved health and well-being when they have access to nature, including parks, gardens, greenways, and natural resource areas. The threats to our land, air, and water can be managed with the identification, promotion, and adoption of environmentally-sustainable policies and practices.

Enhancing and Preserving Natural Areas Citizen Science

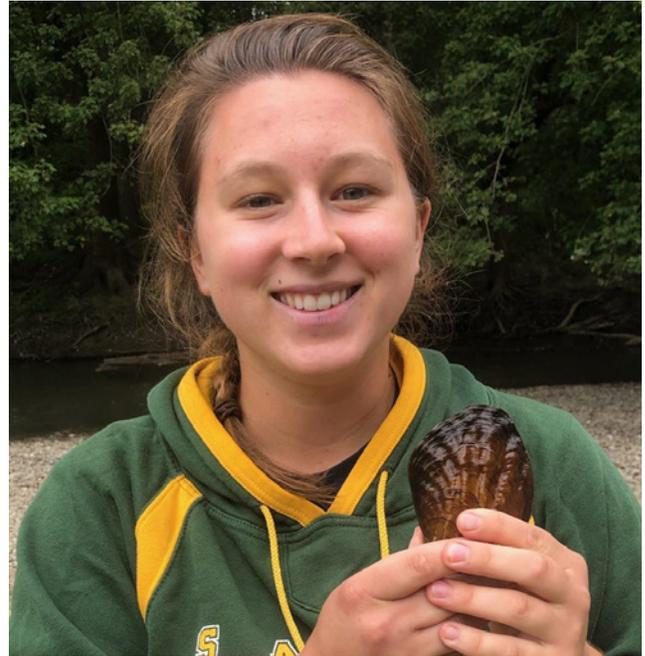
Just as the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs were developed to support and extend the reach of Extension educators, citizen science programs were created to do the same for scientists and researchers. Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists participate in a variety of citizen science programs each year and they continued those research and scientific contributions in 2020 with CocoRaHS, gathering precipitation data; Monarch Watch, tagging and tracking migrating monarchs; and I-Pollinate, collecting data on pollinators. Volunteers also worked with researchers at partner organizations to conduct bat, bird, dragonfly, frog, mussel, and squirrel surveys. All of these data collection projects can happen in the volunteers' own backyard, neighborhood, local park, or forest preserve and it helps advance science to protect and enhance our natural resources.



Monarch tagging helps scientists understand the dynamics of the butterfly's migration. Citizen scientists across North America tag a quarter of a million monarchs each year. Donna Siders, a Ford-Iroquois Master Gardener, is pictured above with one of the monarchs she tagged this year.

Strategic Planning

After 14 years of Master Naturalist program development and a newly expanded staff, it was time to take a look at strategic planning. In late 2019 and early 2020, brainstorming activities were held with members. The suggestions gathered at these events led to a focus on public outreach around growing native plants and understanding climate change.



Maddy Kangas at River Bend Forest Preserve. The mussel survey takes place every year in partnership with Illinois Natural History Survey, Upper Sangamon River Conservancy, and Champaign County Forest Preserve. Photo taken by Master Naturalist Volunteer Ellie McGrew.

Program Reach



1,760 Educational Contacts
Participants in All Programs Last Year



22 Educational Events
Educational Sessions Offered Last Year



12 Webinars
Digital Learning Events Last Year



180 Trained Volunteers
Total Master Naturalist Volunteers



\$264,047 Volunteer Value
Value of Services Performed by Volunteers



Local Food Systems and Small Farms

One in every nine Illinois households experiences food insecurity and its rise over the past 10 years significantly impacts the health and well-being of Illinois residents. Issues with access to and affordability of healthy food options can perpetuate chronic illness. Healthy people and communities require safe, nutritious, and abundant food, as well as the education to make every food choice and every food dollar count.

The agriculture and natural resources team is focused on providing education enabling people to grow their own food. We support several community and production gardens; teach classes on seed starting, garden planning, and food preservation; and provide fruit and vegetable plants and seeds to community members.

Food Access

Donation Gardens

Every year, Master Gardeners grow food in community gardens, which is donated to local organizations. This year, in response to social distancing guidelines and the increased need for food donations, the program was expanded to allow Master Gardeners to donate food from their home gardens to approved food pantries and shelters. Forty-two Master Gardener volunteers in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties collectively donated 952 pounds of food to 10 different pantries and shelters, including Eastern Illinois Food Bank, Iroquois Memorial Hospital's Task Force for the Underserved, and Danville Rescue Mission.



Food harvested from a community garden for donation to the local community.



Persimmons are native to Illinois and they ripen very quickly. You can see one green fruit and one nearly ripe fruit. Within a week or two, all fruit will be over ripe.

Food Production

Edible Native Landscaping

Local Food Systems and Small Farms Educator Erin Harper wrote a guest blog series on native plants that produce an edible part: fruit, nut, or flower. In order to provide the information to a vast audience, videos were created to detail growing preferences, general care, and harvest tips for several edible native plants. These included plants sold in the annual Master Naturalist tree and shrub sale. Providing growing tips for native plants encourages those who may not be experienced at plant care to give them a try and increases the plants' survival rate. The tree and shrub sale brings awareness to native plant species and provides education about tree care. A capacity limit is always set before the sale begins. In 2020, 417 native trees and shrubs were distributed and, of those, about 115 were food-producing, including Paw Paw, Persimmon, Hazelnut, and Aronia plants.

Program Reach



567 Educational Contacts
Participants in All Programs Last Year



19 Educational Events
Educational Sessions Offered Last Year



7 Webinars & Online Learning
Digital Learning Events Last Year



16 Community Gardens
Supported by Extension Staff and Volunteers



922 Pounds Donated
Volume of Produce Donated to Local Communities



\$1,327.68 Value of Donated Food
Based on Average Value of \$1.44 per Pound

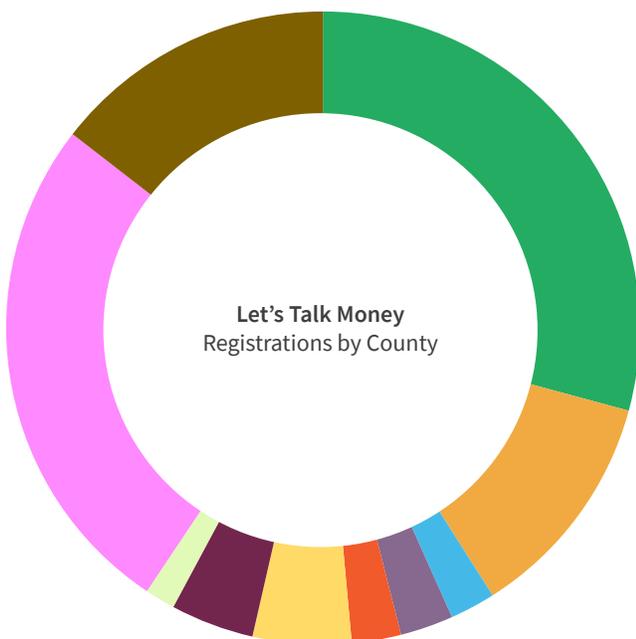


Providing Financial Answers During a Pandemic

The pandemic upset people’s financial plans and rocked their daily lives. Illinois Extension’s consumer economics educators responded by implementing a 12-week webinar series that combined Money Mentors volunteer training with public financial education. Let’s Talk Money was a weekly forum for questions, discussions, and answers. Overall, 584 people registered for one or more of the webinars. Common money management topics were covered, in addition to pandemic-specific concerns and relief programs. Other issues, such as facing financial fears and accessing credit were also addressed. The recorded webinars continue to be viewed, even after the conclusion of the series.

- Median attendance each week was 84 people.
- 21 new Money Mentors were trained; 18 from our unit.
- Of those who responded to a post-evaluation survey, 96% said they were “quite or extremely likely” to pay down debt and 85% planned to increase savings.
- Recorded webinars received 730 views in the last 8 months.

27% of people who registered for Let’s Talk Money were from our four counties



- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| ● 151 Champaign | ● 26 McLean |
| ● 61 Cook | ● 22 Will |
| ● 12 DuPage | ● 8 Vermilion, Ford, Iroquois |
| ● 14 Kankakee | ● 135 Other IL Counties |
| ● 13 McHenry | ● 75 Non-IL Resident |



Financial Wellness Checkup

The consumer economics team launched a five-week social media campaign in the summer of 2020. Financial Wellness Checkup promoted positive financial behaviors and provided practical tips and resources to improve financial well-being. Each week a different theme was highlighted:

- Creating a credit management plan.
- Learning easy estate planning.
- Planning for back-to-school.
- Avoiding financial exploitation.
- Growing your savings.

Around the Table

Extension’s consumer economics team hosted an Around the Table family finances campaign and many other Extension social media pages shared it.

Social Media

Facebook @Family.Finances.Food

Twitter @famfinancefood

Instagram family.finances.food

Program Reach



77 Community Members Paired with Money Mentors Volunteers



1,680 Listens to the Family Financial Feuds Podcast



13,955 Active Learners in the Online Financial Planning for Young Adults Course



27,167 People Reached with Financial Wellness Checkup Social Media Campaign



extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/consumer-economics



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>



Financial Wellness for College Students

Nine undergraduate students, who were interested in personal finance, completed an on-campus internship with Extension through a partnership with the University of Illinois Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics. The students practiced providing financial outreach education by answering college students' questions through Zoom meetings and writing blog posts. The Be Centsible blog completed its first full year in 2020. A total of 36 posts, written by college students for college students, received 1,959 views. Each blog post provides research-based information in a student voice and is peer-reviewed before being published. The five most viewed posts reflect the concerns of today's college students:

- How can I save on groceries?
- How often should I check my credit score?
- How can I receive a stimulus check?
- Where did my money go? (A beginner's guide to budgeting)
- How do I open a checking account at a bank?



Take a look at the latest Be Centsible blog posts at extension.illinois.edu/blogs/be-centsible

Stepping Up to Meet Educator Needs

While working from home, many local support staff members learned to close caption videos to make them more accessible. Once videos were closed captioned, they were posted and linked for online viewing. Extension educators greatly appreciate support staff. We couldn't do what we do without them!

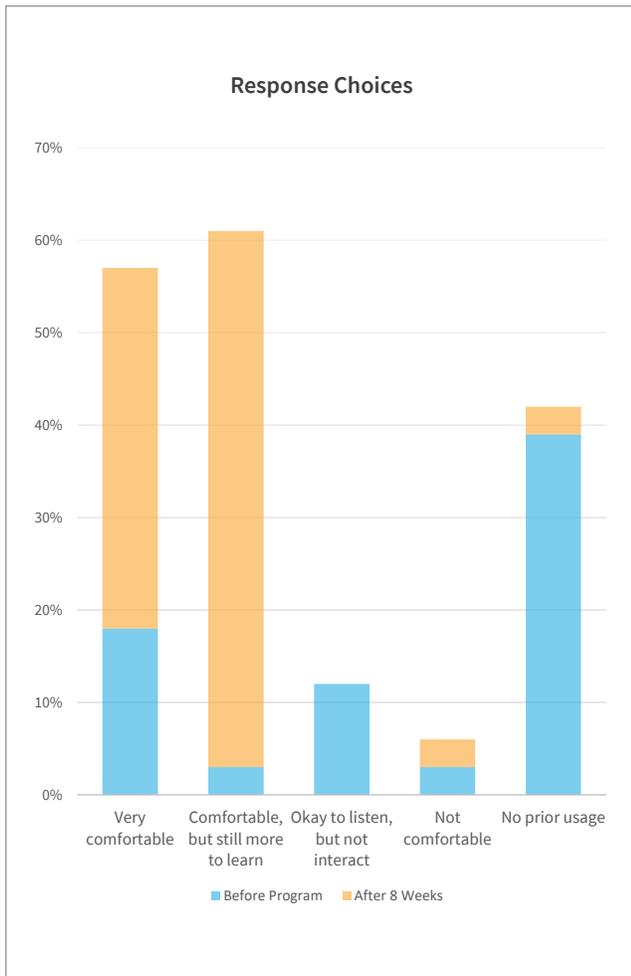




Resilience and Zoom

Zoom was new to many of our participants as we moved into web-only delivery in March 2020 and there was definitely a learning curve. Extension staff learned how to virtually deliver classes they had never thought about providing online before and participants, who had never entertained online participation before, joined. The family life team surveyed participants following an eight-week interactive series, Life's Moments: From Memories to Legacy, to gauge their comfort level with Zoom technology. Educators joined each session early to offer tech support to anyone who needed extra assistance and participants showed tremendous growth in their level of comfort with Zoom. This is a transferable skill that they can also use to communicate with friends and family and access additional educational opportunities.

One participant continued to join each session, even though she couldn't get her mic to work. Finally, on the morning of the fourth session, educators were able to get her audio working and hear her for the first time. It was a thrilling moment for all. From that moment on, she was able to contribute verbally, rather than only participating via chat.



The newly completed pavilion at Douglass Discovery Garden in Danville, which will host students from Kenneth D. Bailey Academy, as well as other youth and adult Extension program participants. Photo: Jenney Hanrahan

New Outdoor Meeting Space at Douglas Discovery Garden

Douglas Discovery Garden in Danville is host to many Vermilion County Master Gardener projects and events. The garden is home to several home landscape design features, a small prairie, a fruit orchard, raised garden beds, an herb garden, a gravel bed for growing young trees, compost demonstrations, and more.

The trees grown in the gravel bed (50 - 100 per year) are planted in neighborhoods around the city, often as street right-of-way trees, but also as a way to turn abandoned lots into mini parks. The fruit grown in the orchard and vegetables grown in the raised beds are donated to food pantries. The vegetable beds are also an outdoor classroom, teaching students from Kenneth D. Bailey Academy to grow and care for their own food. The 7th and 8th graders learn where their food comes from and how to take it from the garden to the dinner plate.

In 2019, Master Gardener Marge Prideaux secured a donation from the Golden K Kiwanis Club to build a pavilion with tables, benches, and electricity to provide a meeting and outdoor classroom space. The pavilion was completed in fall 2020 and will host KDBA students this summer. Empowering youth to grow and prepare their own food is another step toward ending childhood hunger.



extension.illinois.edu/cfiv



In March, the Money Mentors program pivoted away from in-person mentoring to online, phone, and email contacts. The first online Money Mentors volunteer training, created and held in June, was a huge success. Our unit graduated 19 new mentors. Interestingly, this class was younger, overall, than the typical training class; 58% were 34 years, or younger. Since graduating, the new volunteers have embraced mentoring virtually. In 2020, college students made up 60% of the requests for help — a much higher percentage than in past years. Many of the requests were referred from the university’s Student Money Management Center. Students’ top financial concerns were:

- Budgeting
- Savings Plans
- Student Loans

Once the mentoring relationship is complete, each mentor completes a final report. Some of the financial goals accomplished by mentee participants in 2020 include:

- Figured out what student loan monthly payments would look like in various situations.
- Learned to track personal expenses (i.e. “wants”) and change some life habits.
- Increased personal savings rate to have an emergency reserve.
- Started saving for a house.
- Called credit card company to renegotiate the interest rate.

In response to the question, “What happened that was positive as a result of working with this mentee?” one mentor reported: “Mentee said it helped greatly to have someone on the outside able to discuss various options without the emotional investment.”



SNAP-Ed 2021 Calendar

Throughout the pandemic, the SNAP-Ed team maintained a connection with partner agencies. SNAP-Ed printed 2021 calendars with recipes and other tips for staying healthy. The calendars were distributed to several organizations that gave them out to their clients. Presbyterian Church in Urbana, for example, gave the calendars to their food pantry guests. The guests told pantry staff that they were happy to receive the calendars and enjoyed the nutrition information. One guest said that she appreciated the recipes because it gave her ideas for nutritious meals to feed her daughter. Another guest, who suffers from health conditions, likes to find new recipes to fit their diet. Several guests mentioned that they had already tried some recipes and looked forward to trying more, in addition to reading through all of the tips.



eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/



Ginger Boas
County Director



Stephanie Acevedo
SNAP-Ed Educator



Chelsey Byers
Family Life Educator



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