

2019-2020

Addressing Local Needs, Solving Global Challenges



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Bond, Clinton, Jefferson,
Marion, and Washington Counties

A Message from the County Director

On behalf of University of Illinois Extension and the staff serving Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, and Washington counties, I want to personally thank you for your ongoing support as we continue navigating through unprecedented times.

Illinois Extension has always prided itself on adapting to serve the needs of our community. Last year was no exception as the “new normal,” brought on by the pandemic, forced us to pivot and rethink how we would continue serving in new and innovative ways. Managing the physical and emotional health of our families and community during this sudden shift into a virtual world became a priority like never before.

At Extension, we have always taken research-backed action to address community needs. We’ve categorized our efforts into areas we

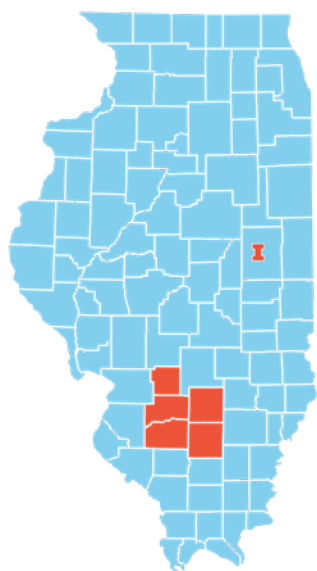
call the five grand challenges: community, economy, environment, food, and health. Extension leaders and local stakeholders further defined priority initiatives for each of the five grand challenges. Contained in this report are the many ways Extension has met these challenges throughout 2020, along with our focus for 2021.

Please take some time to browse this impact report and learn about some of the success stories of 2020, such as the virtual adaptation of 4-H’s STEM offerings and SNAP-Ed’s nutrition education programs. We are excited about the upcoming year and the programs Extension will deliver throughout Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, and Washington counties. Please visit our website and follow us on social media to learn more about events and activities offered through Extension.



Jordee Koehler
County Director

Serving, Bond, Clinton, Jefferson Marion and Washington Counties



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Serving Illinois During a Global Pandemic



When early signs of COVID-19 arrived in Illinois, families and businesses across the state were forced to confront a reality unlike anything they could have imagined. With schools transitioning to virtual learning, parents were hungry for information about managing the physical and emotional health of their at-home learners. Families suddenly found themselves together at home more, where they explored new hobbies, such as gardening and food preservation. Farmers needed to navigate the numerous challenges facing both local and global food supply chains. Almost overnight, restaurants and retail stores had to rethink their business models or risk becoming irrelevant in a suddenly virtual world.

As the challenges mounted, the Illinois Extension network emerged as an effective method for creating and sharing timely, research-backed solutions to many of the most pressing issues we were grappling with. Extension's educators led the way forward during a time of uncertainty for many. We are proud to share some of our highlights from the past year.

Illinois Extension provided applied research and education to address statewide challenges and local issues.

We nurtured local talent. Extension supported 7,207 Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Money Mentor, and 4-H volunteers. They devoted nearly 570,000 hours of community services and support, valued at \$16 million.

We met learners where they lived. During the past 12 months, Extension websites garnered more than 12.8 million visits. Our social media strategy generated more than 200 million impressions, highlighting Illinois news, events, and research.

We partnered to create synergy. Our impact is magnified through more than 2,000 local, state, and national partnerships. Extension helped partner organizations secure more than \$7 million in grant funds, enabling Illinois communities to address local challenges in areas such as food access, rural economic infrastructure, and workforce development.

An independent research firm valued Extension's annual impact on the State of Illinois at \$603 million, about ten times its 2019 budget of \$60.9 million.

Illinois Extension created positive economic benefit for the state of Illinois. The positive economic outcomes of Extension's programs were estimated as at least \$477 million in 2019.

Extension programs stimulated local and state economies through employment and program expenditures. Economic output in Illinois related to Extension expenditures was \$126 million for 2019. Illinois Extension directly employs 655 FTE personnel, and generates an additional 403 FTE jobs through indirect and induced impact effects.

Extension helped residents, businesses, and local governments adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educators and faculty specialists dove deeply into unique needs related to the pandemic. Farmdoc's Coronavirus and Ag seminar series attracted more than 7,400 live participants over 20 seminars, covering topics such as retail food prices, livestock markets, trade, and ethanol.

Program partnerships helped Illinois families connect with local food resources. Extension's Illinois Nutrition Education program published Find Food IL, showing the location of free and subsidized meals and food access points in a searchable, mobile-friendly mapping application.

Our staff learned to create rich, meaningful online learning experiences. With in-person meetings restricted, we hosted nearly 25,000 online and in-person educational sessions, benefiting more than 600,000 attendees. Illinois 4-H embraced an online format for summer exhibitions in every county, showcasing the work of 2,200 members at the virtual Illinois State Fair.

Our technology supported connectivity for online learners and remote work employees. Five county Extension offices piloted "drive-up" WiFi sites to make internet accessible to those with needs for schoolwork, online businesses, and social connection.



Applying a Local Lens to Statewide issues

University of Illinois was established as part of the land grant system to provide world-class education, pioneer research, and put learning and discovery into practice to benefit the health and wellbeing of the state's residents and communities.

Extension is built on a local community framework, but our educators and specialists are part of a statewide network of Extension professionals. They work every day to improve the lives of Illinois residents and bring stability and innovation to businesses and communities.

This statewide network of educators, faculty experts, and staff are dedicated to the mission of aligning research to needs and translating that research into action plans. Their work allows Illinois youth, families, businesses, producers, and community leaders to solve problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to changes and opportunities. Educators in local units contribute to statewide efforts in their expert content area. In turn, local units benefit from these collaborative efforts and high-quality resources.

Through input from internal and external stakeholders, Extension focuses on statewide priorities in five core areas: community, economy, environment, food, and health. This blend of long-range focus, shared expertise, and local accountability is a powerful strategy that ensures we stay true to our mission while we tailor our programming to meet local community needs.

Illinois Extension's Grand Challenge Framework

Community Support Strong and Resilient Youth, Families, and Communities

- Thriving Youth
- Connectedness and Inclusion
- Involvement and Leadership

Economy Grow a Prosperous Economy

- Economic Vitality
- Financial Wellbeing
- Workforce Preparedness/Advancement

Environment Sustain Natural Resources in Home and Public Spaces

- Enhancing and Preserving Natural Resources
- Engagement with Home and Community Landscape

Food Maintain a Safe and Accessible Food Supply

- Food Access
- Food Production
- Food Safety

Health Maximize Physical and Emotional Health for All

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Management
- Social and Emotional Health
- Healthy and Safe Environments

Hallmarks of strong, resilient communities include residents who feel connected, have a strong sense of belonging, and appreciate the diversity represented in their neighborhoods. These communities often experience lower rates of violence and offer a higher quality of life. Research has shown that civically engaged youth are more likely to contribute to their communities as adults. Illinois Extension activities play a pivotal role in designing strategies to sustain a leadership pipeline, discovering opportunities for volunteers to actively engage in meeting local needs, and supporting development of robust community networks.



COMMUNITY

1,464
Program
Attendance

18
Educational
Sessions

6
Online Learning
Sessions

Illinois Extension focuses on the following priorities as the foundation of strong and resilient youth, families, and communities.



Connectedness and Inclusion

A sense of community brings people together to support each other and overcome threats to survival and growth. Accepting and celebrating our differences is essential for creating environments where all voices are important and heard. Thriving families and communities are supported by a diverse and deep pool of community members and organizations.



Involvement and Leadership

Community pride soars when residents who volunteer, advocate, contribute, or lead see themselves as part of the solutions to local issues. Decision-makers can best enhance community vitality and improve the quality of life in both rural and urban areas when equipped with the skills and research-based information.



Thriving Youth

Thriving youth are the core of healthy, robust communities. Our mentorship-based youth development model applies a holistic development framework. It focuses on social competence, academic success, career development, and community connection. The 4-H club experience creates opportunities and environments for all youth to thrive, today and tomorrow.



Thriving Youth Stem Programs Move Online

In a year of uncertainty, 4-H set the stage for STEM offerings well into the future. “For more than 100 years, 4-H has given youth a voice to express who they are and how they make their lives and communities better,” said Kyle Miles, Extension 4-H youth development educator. “Kicking off another year of 4-H, especially during such a unique time, gave us an opportunity to take a fresh look at what youth want and need, and meet them where they are in terms of interest. Right now, that means offering STEM project opportunities, alongside the traditional projects.”

Miles considers any opportunity to identify a problem, propose a solution, try it, troubleshoot, make necessary changes, and take action again as a STEM project opportunity. “We normally think of building something when it comes to STEM, but it’s a higher level of thinking — the start of the engineering design process, really — that we are taking youth through, when they work on STEM projects. It’s what parents want for their kids, and it’s what kids need for the future.”

Offering STEM programs online has allowed youth to participate in workshops that previously would have been too far away, increasing participation opportunities.



In addition to monthly project area programs that feature STEM activities, Cloverbud members participated in an online “camp” with daily age-appropriate STEM activities.

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!

Local and state economies depend on recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce and sound economic planning and development. Agricultural operations, large and small, make a foundational contribution to local and state economic vitality. Population projections suggest that metro and rural Illinois communities will experience demographic shifts thanks to the exit of younger workers and a growing retiree population. These shifts are expected to produce serious economic issues. To compound the situation, many communities are already grappling with short- and long-term economic implications of COVID-19.

ECONOMY



3,045
Program
Attendance

55
Educational
Sessions

6
Online Learning
Sessions

Illinois Extension focuses on the following priorities as effective supports for economic stability and prosperity.



Workforce Preparedness and Advancement

The global pandemic has reinforced the need to develop innovative ways to nurture the Illinois workforce. These include career exploration, formal training and re-training programs for economically vulnerable populations, management training, and opportunities for professionals to meet regulatory and licensure requirements for continuing education. Ultimately, a prepared, skilled workforce increases tax revenues.



Financial Wellbeing

Financial wellbeing can affect physical, mental and social health which can result in poorer job performance, reduced ability to concentrate, and bankruptcy. Preventing bankruptcy and financial insecurity reduces the community need for support services. Extension supports financial wellbeing across ages and stages of life.



Economic Vitality

Rural and urban communities must be built on solid foundations. They must plan for growth, prepare for emergencies, and share responsibility for continually seeking ways to promote economic vitality. Agricultural operations, both large and small, are critically important contributors to the economic vitality of Illinois' local and state economy.

The natural wonder of Illinois is more than just its beautiful scenery. The land provides recreation for residents and visitors, habitat for pollinators and wildlife, pastures for grazing livestock, fields for growing food, and the safe water that is essential for all living things. Threats to our land, air, and water can be managed with the identification, promotion, and adoption of environmentally sustainable policies and practices. Carefully developed green spaces and natural assets help youth and adults improve learning and enhance physical and mental wellness. Sound environmental and agricultural policies contribute to a sustainable and diverse environment, increase comfort, reduce government costs, and enhance property values.



ENVIRONMENT

1,468

Program
Attendance

49

Educational
Sessions

13

Online
Learning
Sessions

52

Trained
Volunteers
*

\$41,012

Volunteer Value
**

39

Expert
Consultations

* Total Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers.

** Based on the Independent Sector 2019 rate of \$27.98 per hour.

*** Supporting home and natural environment inquiries.

Illinois Extension sustains natural resources in home and public spaces by focusing on these educational priorities.



Enhancing and Preserving Natural Resources

Water, land, and air quality have significant implications for our survival. These shared resources must be managed through ecological balance and sustainable practices. Our future depends on our ability to effectively steward these resources for generations to come.



Engagement with Home and Community Landscapes

There is growing evidence that exposure to plants and green spaces provides many benefits, like improved health, quality of life, concentration, and relationships. Sustainable home landscapes can net economic benefits to communities through increased property value. They also can create environmental benefits for all by supporting pollinators and other important contributors to ecosystems.



Engagement with Home and Community Landscapes

LUNCH AND LEARN

In 2020, the Ag and Natural Resources team made the move to cyberspace. With more people than ever gardening and working from home, Lunch and Learn sessions have been a perfect fit to take workshops digital. Sessions tackle a wide range of horticulture and natural resource topics. Participants can call in or join on any computer or mobile device. They also have the opportunity to ask questions about the topic at hand, much like a radio call-in show. All sessions are recorded, so they can be viewed any time.

Native plants, raised garden beds, beneficial insects, pollinators, and trees have been just a few of the subjects featured. Each program is led by a Master Gardener or Master Naturalist with an interest and expertise in that subject area. “This has been a perfect way to connect clients with the volunteers and give the volunteers a chance to do what they love — help people learn about their environment,” said County Director Jordee Justice Koehler.

Lunch and Learn kicked off in May and was offered every other week through the growing season, tapering off to monthly sessions through the winter months.



Tree health has been a popular topic for Illinois Extension programs in recent years. Illinois Extension staff offered helpful information on this subject to clients at home.



Planning for Pollinators was offered online in the winter to teach community members what they can do at home to attract and help pollinators in their area.

Lunch and Learn has been a perfect way to connect clients with the volunteers.
JORDEE JUSTICE KOEHLER

MASTERS COFFEE BREAK

The Masters Coffee Break has become an outlet for local Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to connect. The 52 active “Masters” had become accustomed to connecting at various volunteer opportunities throughout the year. When the option for them to share information and ideas as they worked on different community projects was suspended due to COVID-19, they needed a chance to network. Masters Coffee Break is held twice a month on Zoom to encourage that engagement. They can share the progress in their at-home projects and ask questions of other volunteers. The Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners bring a value of more than \$40,000 to the area annually through their volunteer hours helping with community projects and leading educational programs.

PINING FOR EVERGREENS

One of the most popular online programs in 2020 was Pining for Evergreens. Clients learned the best pruning practices for their evergreen trees and were invited to share any questions they had. The workshop included a demonstration from two local Master Gardeners on different ways to make use of evergreen trimmings by turning them into decorative holiday swags. The demonstration has been the most popular horticulture video on the Illinois Extension BCJMW YouTube channel in the past year.



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

Advances in agricultural practice driven by research and technology have the dual benefit of improving production efficiency and reducing the environmental impact caused by the food production system. While our production is high, one in every nine Illinois households experience food insecurity, and its rise over the past 10 years significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of Illinois residents. Over 2 million Illinois residents rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for food assistance according to May 2020 totals from Illinois Department of Human Services, with a 14% spike in the latter half of the year associated with the effects of COVID-19.



FOOD

4,808
Program
Attendance

104
Educational
Sessions

37
Online
Learning
Sessions

245
Pounds of
Produce
Donated
*

\$353
Value of
Donated
Food
**

281
Expert
Consultations

* Volume of produce donated to local communities.

** Based on average value of \$1.44 per pound.

Illinois Extension supports a safe and accessible food supply by developing knowledge and educational programs in these areas.



Food Access

Issues with access and affordability of healthy food options can perpetuate chronic illness. Healthy people and communities require safe, nutritious, and abundant food and the education to make every food choice and every food dollar count.



Food Production

COVID-19 presented challenges never before realized: supply shortages from the closure of food and meat processing plants, shifted demand from the closure of restaurants and schools, and consumer fear over uncertain transmission of the virus.



Food Safety

COVID-19 created new areas of concern for consumers on food safety from eating and storing carryout foods and potential transmission on food packages to safely preserving foods grown in home gardens.



I appreciated this so much! ... I don't like to ask for help, and you don't know how much my family needed these groceries!

MOBILE MARKET CLIENT





Food Access Local Program Success Stories

When stay-at-home orders and mitigation efforts eliminated Extension’s ability to personally host mobile markets, SNAP-Ed Educator Ashley Hoffman worked tirelessly with community businesses and organizations, especially United Way of South Central Illinois and SSM Health Good Samaritan Hospital, so food distribution efforts and mobile markets could continue. Because of these partnerships, more than 25 mobile markets in Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, and Washington counties have served over 7,000 families.

In addition to traditional fresh dairy and produce offerings, families were also provided Thanksgiving and Christmas boxes to ensure they had the supplies to provide special holiday meals. Feedback from clients has been overwhelmingly positive:



Volunteers unload boxes of produce and dairy products and carry them to waiting vehicles. Mobile markets are drive-through, so clients are able to remain in their vehicles.

- “This box of food helps my family make it through the month. I work part-time, but with the COVID-19, hours at my job have been cut. Thank you.”
- “I appreciated this so much! I have lost my job and it has been hard finding another one. I don’t like to ask for help and you don’t know how much my family needed these groceries!”
- “Thank you, Ashley Hoffman and U of I Extension, for making this project possible. We are so blessed by your support and partnership.”

With poverty levels as high as 12% for adults and 25% for children, and food deserts located in parts of Marion and Jefferson counties, food access and food insecurity continue to be priority issues that staff are working to address. Food deserts are recognized as low-income areas where a significant number of the residents don’t have easy access to a supermarket or grocery store to purchase healthy food.

The mobile markets reach residents in their home communities with healthy produce and dairy options. In addition to food, the markets provide clients with healthy eating tips and seasonal recipes for some of the items in the produce box. Illinois Extension staff also collected contact information for all the food pantries in the area. The food pantry list is available online and has been given to mobile market clients, in case they need to supplement their groceries between market days.



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



Food Safety Local Program Success Stories

FARMERS MARKETS

Farmers market season was well under way in many areas when the stay-at-home order went into effect last March. Many market managers wondered if they would be able to stay open. The Illinois Extension local food systems and small farms team, including Educator Laurie George, worked together to provide guidance to market managers and vendors.

In addition, George partnered with the Illinois Farmers Market Association to offer a series of seven online meetings over a three-month span. The sessions covered how to safely operate the markets and how to adjust to the different levels of restriction during the pandemic. Each session included opportunities for market managers to share successful ideas.

Almost 300 people participated in the meetings and there have been more than 1,200 views on YouTube. Clients shared



Farmers markets have become increasingly popular in recent years with the emphasis on eating healthier and supporting local businesses. Illinois Extension serves as a valuable resource for that continued growth.

These presentations have important content with informed speakers and I think all parties involved benefited from the information provided.

MARKET MANAGER

that the sessions were instrumental in working with their local communities to implement plans for 2020. In the follow-up survey, one participant stated, “These presentations have important content with informed speakers and I think all parties involved benefited from the information provided. Very pleased with content. Gave examples of what could be done/ best practices and what should be done.”

Throughout the year, George continued to provide education to market managers with additional educational opportunities. Sessions were offered in the fall on hosting winter markets and learning to be a market manager from the ground up.

FOCUS ON SAFETY

Food safety is always of high concern for producers. The COVID-19 pandemic increased those concerns, specifically relating to safe food handling. Seeing the producers’ need for credible resources, George provided a press release and fact sheets to help guide their food safety practices.

George has been actively involved in food safety for several years through the Produce Safety Alliance. She serves as an instructor for PSA grower trainings, which satisfy one of the requirements for the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule for growers.

PSA grower trainings continued throughout 2020. As markets in some areas were able to operate with safety protocols in place, it has been vital to continue educating producers, so they will not only feel equipped to handle the current situation, but be well positioned to safely sell to vendors in the future.



<https://extension.illinois.edu/news-releases/how-does-stay-home-order-impact-farmers-markets>

Nationally, about 86% of annual health care spending is related to chronic disease with research suggesting that up to 80% of premature heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes diagnoses could be prevented. There is clear evidence from health, nutrition, and behavioral research demonstrating the positive impact of research-based communication and outreach to promote physical, emotional, and mental health. With health disparities felt unevenly across Illinois communities, education and outreach efforts need to pay special attention toward surfacing and understanding trends impacting limited-resource populations.



HEALTH

17,930

Program Attendance

1,022

Educational Sessions

11

Online Learning Sessions

SNAP-Education Community Partnerships

34

K-12
Schools

3

Early Childhood
Centers

32

Agencies or
Community Centers

17

Emergency
Food Sites

Illinois Extension works to maximize physical and emotional health for all Illinois residents by focusing on these priorities.



Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

Chronic diseases prevention has collective benefits to all residents of Illinois, such as lower health care costs, increase employee productivity and morale, and decrease absenteeism.



Social and Emotional Health

COVID elevated a growing mental health crisis in the country. Extension has added resources and staff to address the growing need to provide hope and care for struggling individuals and families in the state.



Health and Safety Environments

From school lunchrooms and home-based settings, to 4-H club meetings and day care facilities, Extension is building safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environments.



Health and Safety Environments

NUTRITION EDUCATION GOES DIGITAL

Primarily known for face-to-face nutrition education, the SNAP-Ed teams throughout Illinois transitioned to virtual programming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the summer, staff learned about the new tools and skills to make this transition and are now delivering virtual classes for OrganWise Guys, Great Garden Detective Adventure, Eat Play Grow, and Healthy Cents nutrition programs. While this has taken them out of their comfort zone, local SNAP-Ed community workers found creative ways to continue providing high-quality programming to clients.

Community Worker Krystal Pruden jumped right in by learning new technologies to develop teaser trailers introducing the virtual programs to teachers. Not only has this helped market the programs and add a little something extra to the virtual classes, but the existing relationships she had with schools allowed her to be the only staff member authorized to continue the Great Garden Detective Adventure curriculum in a virtual format.

Community Worker Kristen Buttrum, who was recently honored with the 2020 INEP Individual Excellence in Outstanding Programming Award, also embraced the virtual challenge. She created slideshows highlighting her OrganWise Guy's adventures. Andy enjoyed safe, socially-distanced activities at the park and went to the doctor for a wellness check to make sure his organs were healthy. Bringing Andy to life for her students adds a personal touch to her 10 virtual OrganWise Guys classes. She also holds a Healthy Cents virtual class and regularly shares nutrition education materials to schools and food pantries.



Andy's trip to the doctor was one of the adventures that Kristen Buttrum shared with area students. Seeing Andy at the doctor helps youth know what to expect from their check-up visits.



SPONSORS / LOCAL PARTNERS

Bond County Board
Bond County Home and Community Education
Clinton County Association for Home and Community Education
Clinton County Board

Clinton County Extension Foundation
Jefferson County 4-H Foundation
Jefferson County Board
Jefferson County Youth Livestock Auction Committee
Marion County Board

Marion County Home and Community Education
Riechmann Bros.
Washington County Board
Washington County Extension Education Foundation

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Clinton County Extension

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Jefferson County Extension

4618 Broadway
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
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Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Marion County Extension

1404 East Main
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Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Washington County Extension

9623 Wall Street
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Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

ONLINE



/bcjmwu23



@UoflExtBCJMW



Illinois Extension BCJMW

**Illinois
Extension**

College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating.
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.



If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact the event coordinator. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.

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

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.