

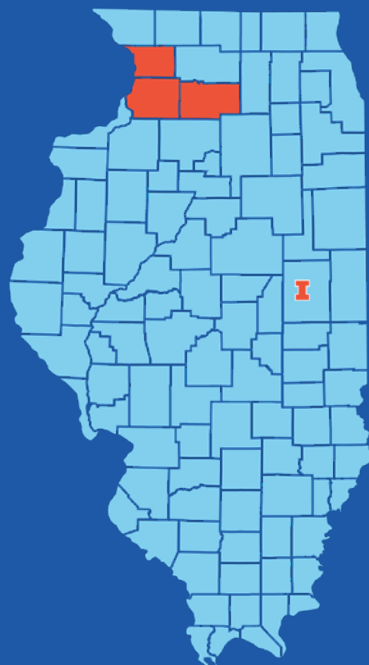


**2020 IMPACT REPORT**

University of Illinois Extension  
Carroll, Lee, and Whiteside Counties

# 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

Whew! What a year 2020 was. Who could have imagined in January that by mid-March our nation would be in the grip of a global pandemic that would change how we lived, worked, interacted, went to school, and cared for each other? While the pandemic may still have us in its grip, University of Illinois Extension has been making a huge impact in the lives of the people we serve.

We pivoted overnight to change our program delivery strategy so that the knowledge we share can make a difference. Our educators have delivered hundreds of virtual programs that ranged from how to plant a successful garden, improve brain health, tell life stories, and lead a 4-H club. The work of our staff this year has made me bust with pride.

Our young people have likely had the biggest challenges to face in 2020. They have not experienced major milestones in the manner they expected, they had to adjust to not being able to see family and friends as they normally would and they changed how they went to school. But, through all of it, they have thrived. They are active in their 4-H clubs, learning each day, and serving their communities.

This past year has demonstrated what I've always known about our work: it is practical and made available to all in a manner that they can access. We are nimble and can adjust on a dime. 2021 will still hold challenges and it may be a while before our nation emerges from the pandemic; but, we will emerge and we will be stronger and more resilient as a result.

Hold on to your hats because 2021 will keep us just as busy as 2020 did and we hope that we will see you again — in person — soon.

Janice McCoy  
County Extension Director





## Extending Knowledge... Changing Lives

University of Illinois Extension is the flagship outreach effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents in all 102 Illinois counties. Since it was established in 1914, Illinois Extension has been an integral part of people's educational experiences. Communities have come to rely on Extension for its practical, research-based educational offerings. Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, Extension's programs are aimed at making life better, healthier, safer, and more profitable for individuals and their communities.

## Serving Carroll, Lee, and Whiteside Counties

University of Illinois Extension is divided regionally into 27 units throughout the state. Our unit serves Carroll, Lee and Whiteside counties. Our staff includes a county director (Janice McCoy), five educators who offer programs in the areas of family life (Karla Belzer), SNAP-Ed (Veronica Skaradzinski), 4-H youth development (Martha Ebbesmeyer), horticulture (Bruce Black), and community and economic development (Mike Delany). We accomplish our work through our many partnerships with community organizations, schools, and government. We also have program coordinators and community workers who assist in our programming efforts. In addition, our volunteers in 4-H, Master Gardeners, and Master Naturalists extend our reach.

## Funding



- 40% County Government
- 34% Federal Funds (including SNAP)
- 23% State Match & Ag Premium
- 2% Gifts & Donations
- 1% Program Income



- 66% Salaries
- 18% Program Expenses
- 9% Leases
- 4% Benefits
- 1% Administrative Costs
- 1% Utilities
- 1% Equipment

## Local Support

Thank you to the individuals and businesses who locally supported our funding efforts in 2020. Last year's donations supported awards and trophies at all three county virtual 4-H shows/fairs, awarded scholarships for Master Gardener/Naturalist training, and paid 4-H program fees for those in need. These are just a few examples of how your donation can make a difference.

## 2020 Sponsors

A.C. McCartney  
Adolph Red Angus  
Al's Quality Service  
Alternative Ag Services  
and Consultants  
Argo Acres  
Blain's Farm and Fleet  
of Sterling  
Boehle Family  
Book Family  
Bradford Victor Adams Mutual  
Brothers Restaurant  
Buhrow Family  
Carroll County Farm Bureau  
Carroll Service Co.  
CGH Medical Center  
Chadwick Lamplighters HCE  
Clark Carroll Insurance  
Cobane Air Freight  
Community State Bank  
D & L Central Foundation  
Elkhorn Grove Township  
Farmer's National Bank

Fassig Family  
Franklin Grove Township  
Freedom HCE Unit  
Freedom Township  
Fulton Saddle Club/In  
Memory of Herb Combs  
G & M Distributors  
Gerken Farm  
Hahnman Township  
Hall Family  
Hopkins Township  
Hugh F. Miller Insurance  
In Memory of Allan Esgar  
In Memory of Donald  
Ramsdell  
In Memory of Isadore &  
Lillian Saidel  
In Memory of Otto &  
Thelma Oleson  
In Memory of Rory &  
Ryan Miller  
Janssen Family  
Jo-Carroll Energy

Jones Family  
Kenney Family  
Klahn Family  
Lake Carroll Women's Club  
Lee County Extension  
Foundation  
Lee County Pork Producers  
Leffelman & Associates  
McCoy Family  
Milledgeville Vet Clinic  
Morrison Veterinary Clinic  
Northern IL Diesel  
Palmyra Township  
Paul D. Young Farms  
Peterson Farm  
Pinterton-Riegel Family  
PLN Mutual Insurance  
Prairie Farms Dairy  
Prophetstown Farmers  
Mutual Insurance  
Raynor  
Rock Falls High School FFA  
Rock River Lumber & Grain

Roger & Dianna Dickson  
Sawyer Family  
Scott's Electric  
Sterling Kiwanis  
Stutzke Family  
Sullivan Foods  
Treter Family  
United Hairlines  
Vaessen Family  
Vandermyde Family  
Veterinary Clinic  
of Prophetstown  
West Point Tree Farm  
Whiteside Co. Pheasants  
Forever  
Whitmer Family  
Woodland Township  
Wyoming Indians 4-H Club  
Young Family



Volunteers are essential to the success of our programs. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with University of Illinois Extension, please call any of our offices and we will be happy to work with you to find the volunteer opportunity that best matches with your interests, talents, and availability.

## 4-H Hall of Fame Winners Announced

The Illinois 4-H Foundation annually recognizes 4-H volunteers for exemplary service to the Illinois 4-H program. “These volunteers fully embody what 4-H strives to instill in youth,” said Angie Barnard, Illinois 4-H Foundation executive director. “They are caring, dedicated, generous leaders and the Illinois 4-H Foundation is extremely proud to be able to provide this honor to thank them for their service to this wonderful organization.” Local volunteers inducted into the 4-H Hall of Fame were Becky Erbsen, Nancy Wadsworth, and Karen Temple.



### Carroll County

Through her leadership, Becky Erbsen has helped grow a thriving 4-H club, served as an enthusiastic Cloverbud judge at the Carroll County 4-H show, and continues to

volunteer in these capacities, plus more. She goes above and beyond to ensure that her members meet deadlines, have the support that they need, and stay informed about opportunities in the 4-H community.



### Lee County

Nancy Wadsworth exemplifies the principles of a 4-H volunteer. She is always up for a challenge and brings her all to each 4-H event. “I do it for the kids,” is her favorite

thing to say. Lee County is very lucky to have Nancy on our 4-H team of volunteers and we look forward to the knowledge and enthusiasm she will bring to the program in the future.



### Whiteside County

Karen Temple’s mission during her 20+ years as a 4-H leader was to provide an understanding of parliamentary procedure, introduce career opportunities, emphasize

community service, offer opportunities to learn new skills, and broaden horizons with new experiences. She is one-of-a-kind and we are lucky to have her as a caring, dedicated, gracious volunteer and friend.



[go.illinois.edu/CLWVolunteers](https://go.illinois.edu/CLWVolunteers)

## 2020 Outstanding Master Gardener Awards

The Master Gardener program trains volunteers in the science and art of gardening. These individuals then pass on that information, advising and educating the public in their communities on gardening and horticulture. Two Whiteside County Master Gardeners, Judy Holesinger and Mary Lou Angone, were recognized this year as Outstanding Master Gardeners for 2020. “It’s a testament to the quality, passion and dedication they have for their communities,” said Mary Nelson, agriculture and natural resource program coordinator in Whiteside County.

Judy Holesinger has been an active Master Gardener since 2010. She has been a leader and a doer for the Whiteside County program. Judy mentors Master Gardener interns with expert guidance and support, while freely sharing her knowledge. Judy has assumed the leadership role for the annual Fulton plant sale and the Fulton Children’s Garden. She has given numerous presentations to partnering organizations and to the public on request. A humble individual, Judy often works selflessly and without recognition.

Mary Lou Angone has been an active Master Gardener since 2000. With a quiet and calm manner, she always leads by example. Mary Lou promotes the Master Gardener program through multiple outreach efforts, but plays an integral role in youth education programming in Whiteside County, working collaboratively with both internal and external stakeholders. She always dives right in with a kind word and a smile on her face.



Whiteside County Master Gardeners Judy Holesinger (left) and Mary Lou Angone (right) receive their 2020 Outstanding Master Gardener Awards.



Art is not only a talent, but a learning experience for these participants in the Visual Arts SPIN Club.

## Extension Engages Latino Youth

Mary Finney has been a 4-H program coordinator at Extension for one year. Tasked with creating programs to engage Latino youth and their families, she has been laying the groundwork, creating access to community-based programs focused on this underserved population. Having a bilingual/bicultural individual in this position, someone who has lived the culture, understands it, and is passionate about helping people in each county, is an important factor in its success.

Finney has been working to identify the interests and needs of local youth and families and is creating responsive programs to meet those needs, while providing a fun experience. In addition to reaching the youth, educating their parents, and building program capacity, Finney is diligently learning all there is to know about 4-H, itself.

“I’m starting from scratch here in Whiteside County and that’s what’s so exciting to me — to shape this program to match the needs of each community, while building trust with the Latino population,” explained Finney.

She’s made connections with entities already serving the Latino population, like churches, Mexican grocery stores, and restaurants and she’s identified the bilingual children at local schools. Now she’s creating English and Spanish versions of all program information and fliers.

“A big portion of ensuring the success of this program is engaging parents. I’m reaching out to their children through the schools and then encouraging the parents to reach out to me for information. It’s a trust-building process,” said Finney. The major barrier to Latino youth participation in community-

based organizations is the fact that most parents have no prior experience with youth organizations. They lack an understanding of the benefits of such organizations and how to access them. Even more importantly, Latino parents feel no connection to organizations like 4-H; therefore, they have no trust in them. The presence of staff with a deep understanding of Latino culture and fluency in Spanish enables 4-H to build the relationships and establish the trust that is needed. This takes sustained effort over time.

While she was learning the nuances of 4-H and connecting with the community this past year, Finney jumped in and scheduled a SPIN club for 8 to 13-year-olds. A 4-H SPIN club is a special interest group where members learn about a specific topic. Themes vary, but some examples include nature, heritage arts, science, engineering, gardening, and technology.

Finney was excited to start a Visual Arts SPIN Club with the help of volunteer Alicia Bushman. “Those first two sessions were completed in person. We had a lot of fun and then the pandemic caused us to do the remaining four sessions virtually. We rallied and created supply packets for each session and dropped them on each club member’s porch,” Finney recalled.

In addition to providing supplies, Finney and Bushman created an instructional video for each virtual class, showing how to complete the project. Once they completed the task, SPIN club members sent photos of their completed artwork.



Visual Arts SPIN club goes virtual and painters enjoy creating the northern lights. A painting is a poem and every child is an artist.





Abby Stichter shows a Tech Changemaker participant some tips and tricks on her cell phone.

# Tech Changemakers Debuts Locally

Tech Changemakers is a new collaboration between the National 4-H Council and Microsoft. Lee County was one of only eight counties chosen for participation in Illinois and 4-H Program Coordinators Kathy Book and Allie Johnston were eager to kick-off the pilot program, which ran January through March 2020.

“Just 50 sites were chosen across the country to pilot Tech Changemakers. We are very excited to be one of them,” said Book.

The premise of Tech Changemakers is getting broadband internet access to people living in rural communities across the U.S., in addition to teaching computer skills so they are able to utilize the technology. According to a National 4-H Council report, more than 24 million people living in this country, including 19 million living in rural communities, do not have access to broadband internet, an essential service in today’s economy. Limited access to broadband internet, combined with the growing need for digital skills, is impacting access to economic opportunities for people across the nation.

At 4-H we are continually exploring new ways to engage youth to expand current skills or learn new ones. Tech Changemakers is a great avenue to accomplish that.

KATHY BOOK

That’s why National 4-H Council and Microsoft are working together through the 4-H Tech Changemakers program to empower 4-H teens in 91 communities across 15 states to lead digital skills trainings, teach the value of digital tools, and find technological solutions to real-world problems.

“In order to complete the program requirements, we implemented a mentorship, of sorts, which paired teens with older adults to teach them computer techniques,” Book explained.

To further its mission to empower youth to become innovators and leaders in their communities, National 4-H Council and Microsoft teamed up to explore digital access among teens through a national survey. The survey, which polled over 1,500 youth between the ages of 13 and 19, investigated how a lack of broadband internet access affects social mobility and economic opportunities. The results suggest that limited high-speed internet access can have long-lasting impacts on a young person’s self-confidence, career opportunities, and likelihood of attaining financial success.



Whiteside County 4-H members joined the local health department to encourage wearing masks in order to keep communities safe and healthy.

## Making the Best Better

Making the best better is 4-H Program Coordinator Allie Johnston's goal as she strives to meet the needs of her community and every 4-H member. In her role, she is responsible for implementing 4-H youth development programs designed to foster the acquisition of knowledge and the development of individuals and communities in Whiteside County.

In 2020, making the best better meant changing all of her daily processes, shifting in-person activities to virtual meetings, and creating pandemic-specific service projects and kindness clubs with staff members.

In March, her focus was on making safety kits for all of the clubs in Lee, Whiteside, and Carroll counties. "The staff spent time working to make the kits, which included personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks and hand sanitizer, in order to ensure the safety of the club members, but also to encourage them to continue to participate and stay engaged," Johnston said.

She stayed in contact with all of her 4-H club leaders, sharing updates to state guidelines and helping them create Zoom get-togethers to continue club meetings. As summer approached and planning for the 4-H fair began, she communicated to members the many changes that came along with moving to a virtual format. Some members were overwhelmed by the online format, but Johnston was there to guide them through and make their fair experience a positive one.

## The Show Must Go On

When you love the daily face-to-face interaction of your job, pivoting to working from home can be a challenge; but, Molly Sedig, 4-H youth development program coordinator in Carroll County, chooses to look on the bright side. "It's been a year of many changes, but we have rallied, supported each other, and have succeeded on many levels," Sedig said.

The annual 4-H fair required quite a bit of rallying and whole lot of creativity from Sedig and her team. "Although going virtual was a difficult decision, knowing early on that we needed to develop an alternative model allowed us to make the most of this opportunity and offer a truly unique experience for our members," explained Sedig.

A typical 4-H fair involves Extension staff, who plan and execute; youth volunteers, who help with set-up; and the 4-H Federation, which helps with announcements and passes out awards. Many other gracious volunteers give their time and expertise to create a quality judging experience for our fair entrants.

This year's experience was no different in those respects. The submission component was adjusted and 4-Hers had the opportunity to submit a video, pictures, slideshow, speech, or whatever they felt most accurately described their project. Staff and volunteers still worked hard to provide the best possible experience, awards were given out in a drive-through ceremony, and many talented professionals volunteered as judges and provided meaningful feedback on all of the projects. Overall, Sedig marks this event as one of 2020's successes.



Caleb Johnson, Soaring Eagles 4-H Club, receiving his fair award during the Lee County drive-through awards ceremony.





# Discovering Wellness at Home

As a University of Illinois Extension family life educator, Karla Belzer provides research-informed, outcome-oriented programming on life issues affecting families with children, adults, and individuals as they age. Through her interactive, facilitative approach, she promotes healthy lifestyle decisions, effective family communication, and management of life transitions, helping people of all ages to live their best life.

“We, in Extension, are educational first responders,” said Belzer. “It is our job to deliver content that is helpful in the moment.” Though she delivers educational content and programming in many life wellness areas, Belzer is most passionate about empowering others to be their best selves.

Belzer experienced a successful year, despite the COVID shutdowns. In March, as Extension offices were transitioning to remote work, she was busy teaming up with local leaders to offer state-wide programs and increase community reach.

“Suddenly, we weren’t bound by geography and that was exciting to me. I like to be able to help people where they are. After all, I was delivering programs from my dining room,” Belzer noted.

We, in Extension, are educational first responders. It is our job to deliver content that is helpful in the moment.  
KARLA BELZER, FAMILY LIFE EDUCATOR

The Discover Wellness While at Home program began with six weekly sessions and featured topics on mindfulness and resilience with a focus on hope. Over the course of the program, more than 1,000 participants from 29 states registered. Each session averaged over 300 people. “The huge response set the ball in motion and catapulted us to being top-of-mind for resources across the state. We even offered a session on decluttering. Since most people were in their homes, we thought it would be of value. The session entailed instructions for cataloging non-titled property, which is something most people don’t think about doing,” Belzer explained.

Next, Belzer focused on providing educators and childcare providers with current strategies and techniques to best serve children in their care. The pandemic created stress, causing everyday problems to become more pronounced.

“It takes time to help children understand current events and the impact they have on our community, nation, and the world. I’m proud to be part of this program to ensure children aren’t forgotten in the stress of this year’s happenings,” Belzer said.

These child-focused resources became one part of Extension’s Mindful May campaign.





## The Mindful Month of May

“This pandemic forced me to be creative and pivot to deliver needed programs. I looked at it as an opportunity serve our community in ways we haven’t previously,” said Family Life Educator Maria Belzer.

One of those creative endeavors was Mindful May, which featured a variety of tools and resources, including videos, blog posts and tips sheets.

Belzer created videos that parents and caregivers could watch with their children, contributed family-focused posts to the Extension 5 Minute Mindfulness for Daily Life blog, and helped develop a tip sheet to distribute information in a quick and easy to understand format for the many families seeking resources.

Throughout the month, Belzer encouraged adults not to avoid talking to children about tough subjects because they are likely aware of more than you think they are. Have the conversation,

be open and communicate with children about what’s happening and what they’re seeing in the news. Be careful not to overwhelm them with details, however. Acknowledge and share your feelings and, most importantly, encourage children to do the same. They need to feel safe expressing their full range of emotions.

“It’s important to gauge the maturity level of children, no matter their age. Take it slow and really listen to them — you’ll be able to better determine when your child is afraid, concerned, or not bothered by all the adult things going on,” advised Belzer.

The family life educators consider brain and mental health, which includes mindfulness, as a priority area in their programming efforts. They will continue providing education on these and related topics.



<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/family-life>

# Mindful May

 @Family.Finances.Food

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/family-files>

3 Wash your face mindfully. Feel the water as it runs off your face.	4 Sit outside and shut your eyes for 5 minutes and take in all the sounds.	5 Make your favorite entre and take in the smells as you are making it.	6 As you are writing a note, pay attention to the feeling the writing utensil brings you.	7 When someone is talking, listen without multi-tasking.	8 When listening to a song, focus in on an instrument for the entire song.	1 When you wake up tune into your senses. What do you hear, see, smell, touch, taste.	Eat breakfast slowly.
10 Wash your dishes without listening to TV or music.	11 Rub your favorite lotion on your hands.	12 Sit quietly for 5 minutes focusing on deep breathing.	13 Focus on your emotions when you think of the funniest movie you have watched.	14 Spend 10 minutes focusing on your reading.	15 Spend 1 hour a day disconnected electronically.	9 Go outside and breathe in the air.	16 Go for a nature walk for a half hour.
17 Spend 10 minutes writing in a grateful journal.	18 Give a hug to a family member or friend and experience what feelings you are experiencing.	19 Pick a flower and admire it for 3 minutes.	20 Take a drink of water and experience all the sensations.	21 When washing your dishes think only about the feel of the water and focusing only on the task.	22 Brush your teeth with the opposite hand.	23 Notice your tone of voice when you are talking to someone else about a serious subject.	
24 Fix your favorite meal because it is something you want.	25 Get up early and appreciate the sunrise.	26 Drive to the grocery store and take a new direction noticing your surroundings.	27 Unwrap your favorite candy slowly.	28 Complete a body scan in 5 minutes.	29 Apply lotion to your hands slowly.	30 Notice 3 things that are beautiful to you and make a mental note.	
31 Eat breakfast slowly.							



## Helping Couples Through COVID-19 and Beyond

Maintaining a strong relationship with your spouse or romantic partner can be a challenge. Finding trustworthy and effective relationship support, especially during a pandemic, can be equally challenging.

The Illinois Strong Couples project offered free, online relationship support to couples throughout the state. Whether the goal was to build greater intimacy and connection, communicate more effectively with each other, or protect their marriage from divorce, the project provided couples with a safe and structured environment in which to confront and work through their issues.

Karla Belzer, family life educator, was part of a team of University of Illinois family studies researchers and Extension educators that created and implemented the project. “We completed training in the spring and started promoting it right away to locate interested couples,” said Belzer.

In order to qualify for the free program, both members of a couple had to be 18 years or older, and the couple had to be married, engaged, or living together for at least six months. The self-paced, six-session program was entirely online and used the ePREP platform. Results from multiple studies indicate that couples who participate in ePREP demonstrate improved relationship and individual well-being compared to couples who did not participate in the program.

I really enjoyed watching the modules together and then trying out the tools and talking about things. Great program. I would tell anyone I know to try it. Kudos for a great program. So glad we got to take it.

ILLINOIS STRONG COUPLES PARTICIPANT



[go.illinois.edu/IllinoisStrongCouples](https://go.illinois.edu/IllinoisStrongCouples)

## Finding Food in Your Community

Veronica Skaradzinski, SNAP-Ed educator, is on a mission to help people lead healthier lives. She usually works a six-county territory in northern Illinois; but this year, with local food pantry sites closed or offering limited hours, she expanded her focus even more, creating or promoting resources to support food access on a regional and state level.

One of those resources was the Find Food IL Community Food Map — a new Illinois community food locator that helps people find food assistance near them. Residents who count on SNAP/LINK, or other nutrition assistance programs like WIC, typically search multiple, specific websites to find the resources they need. The comprehensive new Find Food IL Community Food Map combines all resources into one geolocation mapping tool, making it particularly helpful for those with limited access to transportation.

When the map was launched in the summer of 2020, Skaradzinski and other Extension educators immediately started conducting webinars, teaching people how to use the map. “It’s a game changer for reaching people in need, especially because numbers of those in need have risen since the pandemic began,” Skaradzinski noted.



[go.illinois.edu/findfoodil](https://go.illinois.edu/findfoodil)





## 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

*Before COVID-19, we provided in-person nutrition education at Prophetstown Food Pantry, along with samples of a vegetable soup recipe. A week later, a mom told me that her kids loved the soup. She said, "it's nice to see them so excited about eating vegetables!"*

MARCIA CRUSE, SNAP-ED COMMUNITY WORKER

### SNAP-Ed Community Partnerships



6

K-12 Schools



4

Early Childhood



5

Agencies or Community Centers



7

Emergency Food Sites

## Smart From the Inside Out

Marcia Cruse and Sheila Miller, SNAP-Ed community workers, are enthusiastic about encouraging local families to incorporate nutritious food and active choices into their daily lives. In addition to adults and families, they also work with children in elementary school settings and finding new ways to present nutrition information to kids became the mission this year.

Cruse and Miller developed virtual sessions that students could participate in with their teachers while in class, or while attending school from home. "Scheduling was tough at the beginning because many teachers were overwhelmed with all the changes," said Miller. "We were able to reassure them that our virtual programs were prepared and ready to go. Teachers liked that they could rely on us to present a complete program and we simply had to send the program link."

They created a virtual version of the popular program OrganWise Guys. By bringing the body to life via lovable puppets as organ characters, kids learn what it means to be smart from the inside out. Each grade level includes story books, along with a puppet character to explain what that organ does in the body.

"Children love the books and are fascinated by the puppets. It does a good job of bringing health and science to children," said Cruse.

Children love the books and are fascinated by the puppets. It does a good job of bringing health and science to children.  
MARCIA CRUSE, SNAP-ED COMMUNITY WORKER



OrganWise Andy and Sheila Miller teach a virtual class of second graders at Dillon School in Rock Falls about making Organwise choices.



## Horticulture Training for All Generations

Gardening can be a solitary activity or a community one, depending on the circumstance. Bruce Black is the conduit that connects gardeners of all ages with a shared passion for the joy and sense of accomplishment that comes from community gardening. As an Extension horticulture educator, his passion is working in the community to share knowledge, while helping those in need reduce family food expenditures. He provides horticulture-related educational opportunities for community members, schools, Master Gardener volunteers, non-profit organizations, and businesses.

Black's primary focus is addressing the different generational horticulture education needs and inspiring the next generation of gardeners. His areas of expertise are in fruit and vegetable production, plant propagation, and community and youth garden education. "There has been a shift in the horticulture industry to breed smaller fruits with less maintenance," Black observed. "It seems with the aging Boomer population, as well as busy Millennials, there is greater interest in well-groomed gardens on a smaller scale."

Requests for horticulture information this spring turned into augmented virtual trainings that began in April. Saturday Garden Days featured popular topics on growing container fruits and tomatoes, then morphed into Growing Horticulture in Northwest Illinois, a series of Zoom meetings. The one-hour online events, open to the public, Extension personnel, and teachers, attracted large numbers of attendees. Continuing education credits were available for each program, if desired. In total, seven programs were offered with a focus on simple topics like how to start a garden, common problems growing tomatoes, and common diseases and insects.

Training for Master Gardeners also had to be adjusted in 2020, resulting in a flipped classroom format. A trainee is typically in class for six hours, one day per week. With virtual training, participants could view certain, designated videos on Extension's YouTube channel to count toward the required hours of education. Quizzes at the end of each section allowed participants to work through the curriculum at their own pace.

"One trainee said they watched the videos while on the treadmill. That helped her workout go by quickly and she was learning while exercising," said Black.



New Whiteside County Master Gardener Interns Paula Reid and LuAnn Meyer participated in the 2020 virtual training.

## Master Gardeners on Call

When you're looking for a solution to eliminate weeds in your asparagus patch, or your morning glories won't bloom, who you gonna call? Extension Master Gardeners!

The swiftest solution for your horticulture questions comes from experienced Master Gardeners. The help desk is a resource providing information, suggestions, and support related to gardening questions. Trained volunteers answer questions, troubleshoot problems, and provide guidance and resources to members of the public.

"We offer support to the public from April through September on matters from lawns and landscaping to flower and vegetable gardens," explained Marilyn Kemmerer, agriculture and natural resources program coordinator in Lee County.

Questions run the gamut from lawn weeds, non-pollinating pumpkins, and wildflower identification to bugs in a bog pine. Master Gardeners have the experience, resources, and expertise needed to answer the majority of questions. To have your gardening or landscape questions answered during the growing season (April through September), contact the help desk by phone or email:

### Carroll County

815-244-9444  
uiemg-carroll@illinois.edu

### Lee County

815-875-3525  
uiemg-lee@illinois.edu

### Whiteside County

815-632-3611  
uiemg-whiteside@illinois.edu





## Radio Is Alive and Well in Lee County

At a time when all things digital rule, there is proof that good old-fashioned radio is still alive and well in the Sauk Valley area. Lee County Master Gardeners leverage the time-tested medium through a partnership with WIXN in Dixon. Seeking to educate and entertain, the station has become a successful vehicle for delivering information about the Lee County Master Gardener program.

Each week, Master Gardeners present topics important to a wide range of listeners with varied gardening interests during the live talks. The program has resulted in numerous 5-minute conversations highlighting diverse gardening subjects. Master Gardeners offer their expertise on subjects like landscape planning, advice for beginning gardeners, or simply how to read a seed packet. Other topics include dreaming and planning for your garden in winter, seed storage and starting, raised garden beds, composting, garden tool explanations, and all manners of vegetable and flower growing.

Master Gardeners rotate responsibility for submitting information. Participants in 2020 included Bruce Black, Jeff Coester, Tanja Kazan, Marilyn Kemmerer, Carol Schnaiter, Sherri Stauffer, Mary Kathryn Stenzel, and Judy Truckenbrod.

You can listen to the program every Friday during the noon hour on AM 1460 WIXN.



[go.illinois.edu/CLWMasterGardener](https://go.illinois.edu/CLWMasterGardener)

## Nature-Loving Children Become Wee Naturalists

Mary Nelson is full of energy when it comes to her position as Extension ag and natural resource program coordinator in Whiteside County.

“I’m passionate about helping my Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists bring their wealth of knowledge to the communities. I love working with volunteers to bring fun and informational programs, and to offer continuing learning opportunities,” explains Mary.

Mary works closely with Extension educators, staff, and local partners to assess programing needs. She organizes and coordinates programming to serve Carroll, Lee, and Whiteside counties in the areas of commercial agriculture, horticulture, and natural resources. Programs are created based on project suggestions from the public, Extension staff, and volunteers.

In January and February, Mary hosted Wee Naturalists, an environment-directed series for youth, ages 4 to 7, at the Odell Library in Morrison. The January program — Tracks, Scat, and Clues — focused on searching for signs of animals. Participants experienced looking at and identifying their own footprints and exploring the area for signs of animals that live there. February’s program featured the cold facts of hibernation.

In the spring, the series went virtual and was offered to families with children between the ages of 4 and 7, as well as to pre-K through 2nd grade teachers around the state and beyond. Each program included a lesson, a related story, and a virtual hike, giving children an experience of nature that they may not always see or hear throughout the year. The pre-recorded programs were 45 minutes to an hour long and were posted on the first Saturday of each month.

We look forward to more Wee Naturalist programming in 2021.





## Extension Welcomes Mike Delany

From helping small farmers provide locally grown foods to supporting businesses through difficult times, University of Illinois Extension staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of communities around the state.

Mike Delany joined Illinois Extension in mid-August as a community and economic development educator serving Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside counties. He works to develop and deliver research-based programs, collaborate with community partners, and extend University resources in northwestern Illinois.

Delany grew up in Rockford, earned a bachelor's degree in economics and an M.B.A. from the University of Notre Dame, and a J.D. from the University of Illinois. He has worked and studied in places as varied as St. Louis, Missouri; Stuttgart, Germany; and Santiago, Chile. His areas of expertise are in corporate law and business development. For the past five years, Delany has volunteered with Transform Rockford, Rockford's community development initiative.

The mission of Extension's community and economic development team is to help communities drive creative and informed decision-making that enhances their quality of life. Community and economic development programming helps leaders, residents, businesses, and other organizations build capacity to make timely and effective decisions, use information wisely, and engage the entire community in working together. Supported by a team of colleagues on campus and across the state, Extension educators design and deliver educational programs and technical assistance in a variety of settings, including workshops, small group consultations, and through the use of online tools and resources.



[go.illinois.edu/CLW-CED](https://go.illinois.edu/CLW-CED)



## 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](https://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](https://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

*University of Illinois Extension Community and Economic Development helps communities build capacity for creative and informed decision-making to enhance their quality of life.*



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





Janice McCoy  
County Director



Karla Belzer  
Family Life  
Educator



Bruce Black  
Horticulture  
Educator



Veronica  
Skaradzinski  
SNAP-Ed  
Educator



Mike Delany  
Community &  
Economic  
Development  
Educator



Martha  
Ebbesmeyer  
Youth Development  
Educator



Sheila Miller  
Illinois Nutrition  
Education Program



Marcia Cruse  
Illinois Nutrition  
Education Program



Molly Sedig  
Carroll  
4-H Coordinator



Jane Shaw  
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Office Support



Kathy Book  
Lee  
4-H Coordinator



Marilyn Kemmerer  
Lee  
ANR Coordinator



Mary Finney  
Whiteside  
Latino 4-H  
Coordinator



Allie Johnston  
Whiteside  
4-H Coordinator



Mary Nelson  
Whiteside  
ANR Coordinator



Sunny Porter  
Whiteside  
Office Support



Susan O'Connor  
Unit Marketing  
& Fund  
Development



Mary Sheridan  
Unit Office Support

Thank you to the individuals who serve on our CLW Extension Council. The Extension Council provides guidance to Extension staff when determining programming and outreach efforts.

#### EXTENSION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Katie Armstrong, Erie	Jill Larson, Dixon
Tony Brown, Dixon	Pam Martinez, Sterling
Terry Durham, Sterling	Ethel Richard, Amboy
Nikki Ebersole, Sterling	Carol Schnaiter, Amboy
Jean Eggemeyer, Morrison	Teresa Smith, Dixon
Greg Gates, Dixon	Mark Wand, Prophetstown
Rachel Hill, Milledgeville	Jodi York, Lanark
Gene Jacoby, Rock Falls	

University of Illinois Extension has a long-standing partnership with the Sauk Valley Community College AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps members serve at local agencies, schools and nonprofits to enhance the mission of the organization through service. AmeriCorps members assist with Extension programming year-round. This year, our AmeriCorps members were Marie Barnickel and Tom Eden.

Without AmeriCorps members we would not be able to offer the variety and depth of programming we do. These individuals may serve with us for a short time, but we hope they come back to serve as 4-H volunteers, Master Gardeners, or Naturalists and more.

JANICE MCCOY, COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR





A Carroll County 4-H member shows his sheep during the 2020 virtual fair.

## OFFICE INFORMATION

### Whiteside Main Office

12923 Lawrence Rd.  
Sterling, IL 61081  
(815) 632-3611  
Fax: (815) 716-8922

### Lee Branch Office

280 W. Wasson Rd.  
Amboy, IL 61310  
(815) 857-3525  
Fax: (815) 857-3527

### Carroll Branch Office

807 D South Clay St.  
Mt. Carroll, IL 61053  
(815) 244-9444  
Fax: (815) 244-3708

## ONLINE



/UofIExtensionCLW



[go.illinois.edu/clw](http://go.illinois.edu/clw)



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Cover photos: (top left) Bev Peterson, Whiteside County Master Gardeners, helps participants create a spring floral arrangement at the Blooming Petals gardening workshop; (top right) Shirley Rees receives help from a Lee County 4-H digital ambassador at Tech Changemakers; (bottom left) Carol Schnaiter, Lee County Master Gardeners, stocks the seed library; (bottom right) Ava Prior, Lee County 4-H, hands out trophies at the drive-through awards ceremony.

**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).

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