



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**2021** Addressing Local Needs,  
Solving Global Challenges  
Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell Counties



Earl Allen  
County Director

# Serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell Counties

## A Message from the County Director

This past year has felt like we have been riding a rope swing with a lot of back and forth, up and down, and even some going in circles. Even so, our staff, in collaboration with our many volunteers and partners, have continued to do impactful work that addressed local needs, made our communities stronger, and improved the lives of people across our unit. The efforts required a lot of resilience and a growth mindset, but in the end, joy and satisfaction were found in our accomplishments.

Thank you to all who have worked with us in 2021, and to those who have supported us. We cannot accomplish nearly as much without your help and collaboration.

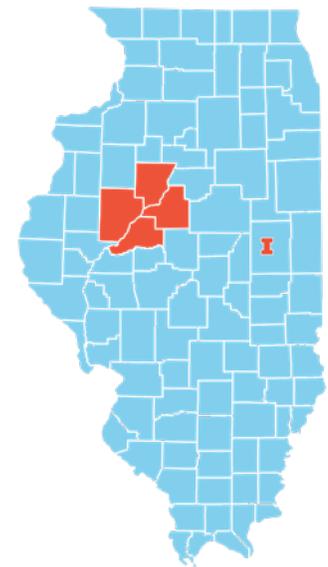
I also give additional thanks to our program participants who have gained and applied new knowledge and practices as a result of our direct education and experiential learning efforts.

You are the reason we exist, and the people we are called to serve as a part of U of I Extension.

This report highlights a small portion of our work. The stories are curated to demonstrate our appreciation for all and to inform you of some things of which you were unaware.

In closing, I want to recognize a great group of staff from our unit who retired this past year. U of I offered an early retirement incentive, triggering seven retirements from our group of 35 staff. Cumulatively these seven staff contributed more than 200 years of work in Extension and served the public well. Congratulations to Janis Blout, Sheila Bolliger, Kathie Brown, Margaret Cover, Deb Donaldson, Irene Edwards, and Cathy Ludolph. May the next chapter in their lives bring them as much joy as they each found in their years working for U of I Extension.

Earl Allen  
County Extension Director



# Think Global, Act Local

Illinois Extension embodies the land grant mission of University of Illinois, providing applied research and education to address societal grand challenges and local issues.

## Community Support Strong and Resilient Youth, Families, and Communities

 Connectedness and Inclusion

 Involvement and Leadership

 Thriving Youth

## 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

Look for these icons throughout this report to see how Illinois Extension is meeting these grand challenges at a local level.

## Illinois Extension 2021 Statewide Highlights

### Outreach Provided

565	335	84
Illinois Communities Served	Educational Sessions Per Week	Online Courses

### Partnerships Supported

6,445	278	1,000
Adult Volunteers	Community Gardens	School Partnerships

### Learners Engaged

8,000,000	14,450	500,000
Website Users	Online Course Users	Educational Program Attendees

### Resources Generated

\$14,000,000	\$242,000
Value of Volunteer Contributions	Value of Donated Garden Produce

Extension leaders meet with local stakeholders to define annual priorities that allow us to respond to evolving and emerging needs and make meaningful progress toward important long-term outcomes. This blend of long-range focus and local accountability is a powerful strategy that ensures we stay true to our mission as we serve communities across the state.



### EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

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

EFNEP provides a deeper experience for those that participate in our nutrition education programming, with regular support and connection with the local EFNEP team. EFNEP helps limited-resource families gain knowledge and skills needed to make behavior changes for healthy diets and active lifestyles. Programs are based on evidence that engages learners in practical, hands-on classes and activities. In addition, EFNEP classes are taught by peer educators who are members of the communities where they work. These team members are trained, passionate, and dedicated to affecting a diverse population through nutrition education.

### Our Community Partners

-  10  
Agencies or Community Centers
-  2  
Food Pantries and Food Banks
-  3  
Early Childhood

At the mobile food distributions focused on serving Hispanic families, EFNEP team members participated by providing healthy, culturally relevant recipes, taste tests, and information about the Find Food Illinois community food map resource to help families learn about other resources in their area.



### SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION

SNAP-Education works with Illinois families in need to make the healthier choice an easier choice. Through classes, workshops, and collaboration with community partners, SNAP-Education positively affect families and communities by using research-based solutions to encourage healthier nutrition and physical activity choices.

### Reach and Impact of SNAP-Education

-  115,473  
Total Estimated Reach
-  416  
Number of Nutrition Education Classes Provided



- 28% Face-to-face
- 71% Virtual or online
- 1% Mix of face-to-face and virtual

After receiving a grant to provide healthy and culturally relevant foods to Hispanic families, Peoria Area Food Bank reached out to SNAP-Ed for assistance. SNAP-Ed staff worked with other community groups to host focus groups for local Hispanic families and leaders. After analyzing the results, four mobile food distributions were planned. SNAP-Ed helped select culturally relevant foods and recipes to share with families.

### SNAP-Education Community Partnerships

-  26  
K-12 Schools
-  9  
Early Childhood
-  29  
Other Agencies or Community Centers
-  20  
Food Banks and Food Pantries



### SPANISH PROGRAMS AT FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

Angela Jimenez and Mari Lopez taught Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) classes at Friendship House in Peoria. The duo are fluent in Spanish and English and teach to participants whose first language is Spanish. “Some of our class members do not know any English,” mentions Angela. “We teach lessons about healthy living and exercise with them.”

The EFNEP program offered two classes at Friendship House, one for mothers and a second for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Through hands-on classes that focus on improving eating habits and physical activity, EFNEP makes a difference in the people served.



### MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

Starting in late Spring of 2020, Food Pantry Network - HOI partnered with Midwest Food Bank and Peoria Area Food Bank to redirect food available through the USDA Farmers to Food Box program. SNAP-Ed staff worked with local partners to identify communities with a gap in available food and coordinate distribution. In addition to Farmers to Food Box, families were given extra items such as milk, food from the food bank, and produce and food staples purchased by HEAL-FSP.

In 2021 the following was distributed:

- Total pounds of food distributed: 93,444
- Total boxes, backpack meals distributed: 4,059



### 12 DAYS OF GIVING CAMPAIGN

This year marks the second 12 Days of Giving campaign. The goal is to encourage donations of items requested the most by pantries: healthy, shelf-stable food, hygiene products, and winter attire. It also educates the general public on the importance of healthy food donations.

“Food pantries tend to get a lot of the same types of donations that are not always the healthiest options,” says Rebecca Crumrine, SNAP-Ed program coordinator. “We know how beneficial things like spices, household supplies, low-sodium soups, and unsweetened applesauce are to families. We would like to help donors think about healthier options when purchasing food pantry donation items.”



### FRESH FOOD DRIVES

With the help of Tazewell County Health Department (TCHD), 17 fresh food drives were held during Hunger Action Month (HAM). Emily Waite, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Food Pantry manager in Peoria, sent Parkside Fitness in Pekin a thank you for the donation of fresh fruits and vegetables. By offering produce, pantries can promote health and help guests manage diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity.

The HAM campaign is just one effort of the Food Pantry Network - HOI. Through the network, Extension SNAP-Ed staff work alongside TCHD and partners from the area food banks and food pantries to support and enhance the local charitable food system.





# 4-H is Growing True Leaders



4-H youth programs are empowering and preparing Illinois youth for success both now and in the future.



## 3,383 Youth Reached

- 936 in 4-H Clubs
- 2031 in Extended Programs
- 335 in Short Programs
- 81 in One-day Programs



## 73 Clubs

- 38 Multi-project Clubs
- 17 Special Interest Clubs
- 18 Cloverbud Clubs



## 88 Programs

- 71 Extended Programs
- 16 Short Programs
- 1 One-day Program



## 522 Adult Volunteers

- 84 Club Leaders
- 34 SPIN Club Leaders
- 24 Cloverbud Leaders
- 112 Fair Superintendents
- 268 Program Volunteers



## 4G Stem Camp

Career exploration in local STEM fields is a priority for 4G STEM Camp. This year's camp included the downtown Peoria Sculpture Walk, led by Peoria Arts Partners volunteers. Throughout the years, 4G STEM Camp has introduced participants to careers through hands-on lessons and tours at places such as Bradley University, Jump Simulation, Precision Planting, Farnsworth Group, Methodist College of Nursing, Caterpillar, and Advanced Medical Transport, Unity Point, CSE Software, and Therkildsen Field Station.



***We are not alone. I have learned and reminded myself I have a great support system: parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, teachers, and classmates.***

My parents have taught me about past generations that have dealt with worse or similar things and though it seems never ending, this too will pass. All of this has taught me to be grateful for the simple things.

***Always remember, you are never alone, you just have to reach out.***

— MASON P. | MASON 4-H FEDERATION MEMBER  
Joy Project 2021



## Joy Project 2021

After months of being sheltered in place in 2020, Mason 4-H Federation teens were feeling the emotional effects and decided to do something to help others who may be feeling the same. Combining their leadership and program planning skills with their creative skills and empathy, they launched The Joy Project 2021 in April. The social media image above is one example of the campaign.



See the complete Joy Project 2021  
[go.illinois.edu/JoyProject](https://go.illinois.edu/JoyProject)



## 4-H Spark Camp ignites curiosity

Hands-on experiential learning is at the core of the 4-H program. When programs transitioned to virtual, local 4-H staff developed an innovative program called 4-H Spark Camp that upheld the 4-H learning style that youth and their families could do together at home.

Spark Camp was a series of virtual hands-on workshops. Instructors included 4-H volunteers, staff, teen leaders, and professionals from several community partners, such as the Society for Women Engineers and Illinois State University CeMaST. The cost of all workshop supplies and materials were by funds received through the Tractor Supply Company Paper Clover campaign. At the time of the workshop, youth and families could log in to the video call, open their kit of materials, and participate in interactive, skill-building activities.

Additional family members could join the youth as they learned how to complete a project or do an experiment. Recordings of the sessions were also provided for those who couldn't attend live.

I loved this as a parent and my 4-Her did as well. The whole experience was beneficial. Getting more comfortable with video conferencing and interacting. Learning new skills.

SPARK CAMP PARENT

A proud Spark Camp participant shows off her completed holiday arrangement she created. This was one of 34 workshops offered through the 4-H Spark Camp virtual program. The innovative program maintained the hands-on, experiential learning that 4-H is known for and allowed youth and their family members to learn together at home. Supply kits were provided thanks to funding through the Tractor Supply Company Paper Clover campaign.

Post-program surveys indicated Spark Camp helped:

- 62% of respondents feel more connected to a friend
- 74% feel more connected to a family member
- 98% of respondents will try something new
- 97% desire to continue learning more about the topics covered

There were 34 workshops offered across three sessions. Over 140 young people registered to attend, with youth registering for an average of four workshops each. Examples of workshop topics:

- Cupcake Decorating
- Pet Care
- Flower Arranging
- DIY Electromagnet
- Basic Hiking Survival
- Chemical Reactions to Fake a Volcano
- Summer Garland
- Butter, Ooblek & Slime: Non-Newtonian Fluids



## New hybrid training expands options

For a few years, new volunteers had the choice to complete the 60-hour Extension Master Gardener training in one of two ways: a face-to-face class or individually online. This year, the horticulture and natural resources team combined the best of both options and created a hybrid model for Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists.

“We designed it so participants did part of their training using a variety of online instructional materials,” explained Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, horticulture educator. “Then, they attended face-to-face sessions that expanded on that week’s topics through hands-on learning, tours of local gardens and natural areas, and hearing from local experts.”

Extension staff vetted, created, and curated the online materials that included videos, websites, and articles. Private Facebook Groups were also used to allow for continued discussion and the sharing of extra resources among the staff and participants.



Kiana Ischner-Washington investigates a sample of macro-invertebrates pulled from a pond at Jake Wolf Fish Hatchery. The Master Naturalist trainees thrive when they are given the opportunity to learn outside where they can touch, hear, and see the subject up close.

This garden is inspiring, I am so glad I had the opportunity to see it.

MEGAN STEIER, EMG TRAINEE AT GARDEN OF HOPE

The hybrid model gave participants more flexibility with the time commitment needed to complete the intense EMG and EMN trainings. The face-to-face sessions were shorter hours than the traditional training. The online portion could be completed as time allowed throughout the week.

“We also know the value in providing opportunities for trainees to connect with each other, current master volunteers, staff, and partners,” said Nicole. “Everyone loves getting outside and exploring new-to-them sites, all while learning.”

Five Master Gardener trainees and eight Master Naturalist trainees were the official inaugural hybrid class graduates. An additional four online trainees took advantage of the invite to attend any of the face-to-face sessions.

## Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Stats



217  
Master Gardeners & Master Naturalists



14,825  
Hours donated



11  
Extension-supported gardens



17,939  
Pounds of produce donated



221  
Expert consultations and volunteer info services



Michelene Koch, Tremont, was one of eight local Extension Master Gardeners recognized with a state EMG award for accomplishments, leadership, initiative and follow-through, collaborations, and continuing education.

## State Master Gardener awards given

Each year, Extension's Master Gardener program recognizes a group of outstanding volunteers across the state who combine their love of gardening with helping others to make a positive impact in their communities and the state. The award winners are first nominated by their peers and then selected by a state committee.

Local winners volunteer at partnering organizations such as Wildlife Prairie Park, Luthy Botanical Garden, Riverfront Farmers Market, Illinois Central College, and Tazewell County Health Department. They also lead Master Gardener projects such as the gardeners helpline and community gardens.

Award winners are also recognized for leadership roles they take on as volunteers.

Local award winners are:

### Sustained Excellence Award

Louise Bassett, Peoria, EMG since 2012  
 Jennifer Bass, Peoria, EMG since 2014  
 Chuck Crider, Dunlap, EMG since 2012  
 Larry Stratton, Peoria, EMG since 2004

### Outstanding Award

Bill Baker, Green Valley, EMG since 2016  
 Bill Johnson, Dunlap, EMG since 2015  
 Michelene Koch, Tremont, EMG since 2011  
 Peggy Shane, Princeville, EMG since 2013

## Juvenile Detention Center prairie plot encourages pollinators



From the perspective of Extension Master Naturalists, the new prairie project at the Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) is an excellent way to increase native plant and pollinator populations. To the JDC administrators, the project is an excellent way to save a lot of money and time mowing grass. Both reasons are making a positive impact in the community.

Extension Master Naturalist Laura Bradshaw is spearheading the project. As a seasoned volunteer in the JDC garden, Bradshaw got excited when Brian Brown, JDC superintendent, presented her with the new prairie idea. "I started the project because Brian was interested in converting the mowed acreage of cool-season grasses into native prairie to save money on mowing and labor," Bradshaw explained. "I saw it as an opportunity to increase diversity and the number of native plants, to encourage pollinators like butterflies and native bees, and act as habitat and food for animals such as birds and caterpillars."

The project includes the establishment of an oak savanna and other prairie plots on the property.

Staff from the Peoria County Soil and Water District and USDA-Natural Resource Conservation District have been invaluable sources of advice for the project. Other Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and Extension staff have assisted with planting and weeding, guidance, and support.

The project can provide educational opportunities in conservation for the residents of the facility and the public for years to come. It has already decreased the amount of mowing needed and restored some of the native beauty of the landscape. It is increasing the environmental sustainability by providing habitat and food for pollinators as well as for birds and mammals and has removed an invasive species known as common reed that also threatened area farmland.



Laura Bradshaw, Master Naturalist, points out plans for the prairie project happening at Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center. This summer Bradshaw coordinated a team of volunteers who planted 484 plugs of native pollinator plants and grasses.



## Ag Tech Connect is resource hub for ag innovation

Central Illinois is known for its rich farmland and is now becoming more well known for its agriculture innovations. Keeping an eye on the future, local community and economic development and ag industry leaders came together for the first Ag Tech Connect event aimed to explore shared opportunities to further relationships and discover applied research and business development needs that can be supported through regional and state community and economic development programming.

Extension Community and Economic Development Educator Kathie Brown worked with Morton Economic Development CEO and Executive Director Leigh Ann Brown to host a panel discussion that included University of Illinois Center for Digital Agriculture. The June event brought together 52 people who represented 22 businesses, organizations, and colleges. From that event, the Ag Tech Alliance Task Team has been established and plans are in the works for future Ag Tech events. The purpose of the team is to build a network for growth opportunities, solution providers, and be a resource hub.

This innovative collaboration is a cornerstone to build on the area's agriculture technology and yield new growth.



Panelists and Ag Tech Connect program investors included Morton Economic Development Council, Compeer Financial, Bottom Line Solutions, Earlybird Feed & Fertilizer, Precision Planting, U of I Center for Digital Ag, Distillery Labs, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, and U of I Extension. The June 2021 event sparked the development of a task force that is building a network for growth opportunities in the ag industry, including training a skilled workforce as well as providing resources for innovations and common solutions.



Community leaders from Havana and the surrounding area came together to provide community input for a study on the future of tourism development. The process included site visits and collaborative vision process. Participants represented organizations such as Jake Wolf Fish Hatchery, Illinois River Biological Station, City of Havana, Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, and Mason County Arts Council.

The goal of this project is to identify the challenges and opportunities present in Illinois communities that seek to develop rural tourism and understand tourists' motivations and constraints to engaging in rural tourism in Illinois. SHARON SUIWEN ZOU, Ph.D.

## Reimagining Illinois Rural Tourism applied research study in Havana



Havana was selected to be a part of an Extension Collaboration Grant aimed to address the increased demand by tourists for outdoor recreation activities.

University of Illinois researchers join Extension professionals and local community leaders to pursue applied research and public outreach on this critical issue. City of Havana, Havana Chamber of Commerce, 353 Court, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and Canton Area Chamber of Commerce partnered with Extension and U of I's Department of Sports, Recreation and Tourism to address sustainable development strategies that align with the communities' values and priorities, advance local workforce development, support local entrepreneurship, and foster collaboration among rural communities across the state.



Dr. Zou's research projects  
[publish.illinois.edu/szou/research/](https://publish.illinois.edu/szou/research/)



As COVID-19 continued to impact governments, businesses, and communities, Illinois Extension’s Local Government Education program increased its outreach aimed at economic investment and community vitality, workforce development, leadership, policy, equity, and resiliency. By partnering with state leadership and organizations in Illinois, the Illinois Extension Community and Economic Development team has provided outreach aimed to help local governments and residents build capacity to strengthen their communities and organizations and improve public services.



Access past and future programs  
<https://go.illinois.edu/LGE>

### Statewide Webinar Reach



60  
Webinars in 2021



2,003  
Individuals Learned about Leadership, Public Service, and Community Involvement



1,094  
Individuals Learned about Meeting Needs of Diverse or Vulnerable Populations



3,955  
Individuals Reached in Economic and Financial Stability Webinars



1,043  
Reached in Economic Vitality and Community Resiliency Webinars

### Community-Driven Broadband Reach



1,228  
Community Leaders Educated on Broadband Expansion Opportunities



714  
Participants Educated on Obtaining Funding and Needs Assessment



416  
Individuals Reached on Broadband Project Management

*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.*

## Financial Report



- 36.5% Federal
- 15.1% State
- 18.8% University
- 21.8% Local
- 7.8% Other



- 75.4% Personnel
- 11.9% Programming
- 0.3% Equipment
- 12.5% Overhead

Fiscal Year 2022

### Extension Council

- Sally Bair, Astoria
- Shundell Broomfield, Peoria
- Meghan Curless, Havana
- Kim Dunnigan, Fiatt
- Erika Eigenbrod, Lincoln
- Maria Gottemoller, Princeville (youth member)
- Paul Gottemoller, Princeville
- Holly Koch, Tremont
- Katherine Mueller, Peoria
- Sunita Shastry, Washington
- Steve Waterworth, Havana
- Patty Wiegers, Lewistown

### Staff retired from Extension 2021

- Janis Blout, 40 years
- Sheila Bolliger, 39 years
- Kathleen Brown, 41 years
- Margaret Cover, 23 years
- Debra Donaldson, 20 years
- Irene Edwards, 22 years
- Cathy Ludolph, 26 years

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## STAFF

Tara Agama Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Kathleen Brown Educator, Community and Economic Development	Katharine Girone Program Coordinator, 4-H	Joli Pierson Program Coordinator, 4-H
Earl Allen County Director	Margaret Cover Educator, EFNEP	Krista Gray Program Coordinator, 4-H	Angela Sassine Office Support
Nate Anton Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Rebecca Crumrine Program Coordinator, SNAP-Ed	Elexus Hampton Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Julann Schierer Office Support
Deb Balagna Office Support	Julie Dantone Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Tara Heath Program Coordinator, Horticulture	Judy Schmidt Educator, 4-H Metro
Kaytlin Beekman Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Deb Donaldson Instructor, EFNEP	Angela Jimenez Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Emily Schoenfelder Educator, 4-H
Christine Belless Program Coordinator, Ag and Natural Resources	Patti Downs Sub-Office Support	Paula Lane Office Support	Jo Elyn Smith Instructor, SNAP-Ed
Janis Blout Program Coordinator, 4-H	Irene Edwards Instructor, EFNEP	Mari Lopez Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Kaitlyn Streitmatter Educator, SNAP-Ed
Sheila Bolliger Office Support	Kathy Ellis Instructor, SNAP-Ed	Cathy Ludolph Program Coordinator, 4-H	Anita Wilkinson Program Coordinator, Communications
	Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle Educator, Horticulture	Skye Mibbs Instructor, SNAP-Ed	

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## OFFICE INFORMATION

<b>Fulton County</b>	<b>Mason County</b>	<b>Peoria County</b>	<b>Tazewell County</b>
15411 N IL 100 Highway Lewistown, IL 61542 (309) 547-3711 Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM	127 S High St, Ste 1 Havana, IL 62644 (309) 543-3308 Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM	4810 N Sheridan Road Peoria, IL 61614 (309) 685-3140 Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM	1505 Valle Vista Blvd Pekin, IL 61554 (309) 347-6614 Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

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## ONLINE



[/UniversityofIllinoisExtFultonMasonPeoriaTazewell](#)



[/IllinoisExtensionFultonMasonPeoriaTazewell](#)

Cover photos: Master Naturalist tour of Bellrose Island, Havana (top left) Chuck Crider, State Master Gardener Sustained Excellence Award (top right) Julie Dantone, SNAP-Ed instructor teaching at Garden of Hope, Peoria (bottom left) Ben Snider, Mason 4-H member, second place recurve archery at 4-H Shooting Sports National Championship (bottom right)

# 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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