



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

**2021** Addressing Local Needs,  
Solving Global Challenges  
Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion Counties



Ginger M. Boas  
County Extension Director

# Staff Serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion Counties

## A Message from the County Director

We faced many trials 2021. Staying safe and healthy came to the forefront. University of Illinois Extension educators and staff embraced the challenge and provided practical solutions to address issues facing our communities. Through relevant education programs, individuals had opportunities to improve their finances, live healthier lives, raise resilient families, enjoy and protect natural areas, and have more productive farms.

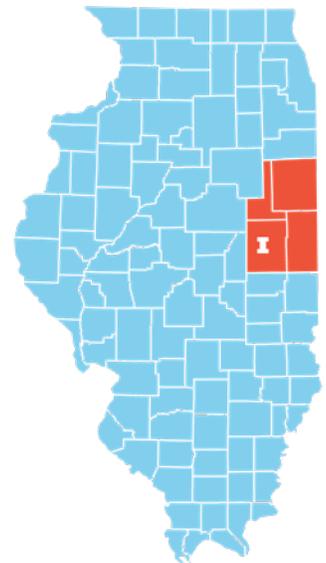
Out of necessity, we brought the research and innovation of University of Illinois answers to right into your homes. Extension pivoted from in-person learning to on-line and on-demand. This dramatically expanded access and accessibility to accurate and relevant information. In-person, online, and hybrid delivery methods allow access to helpful information when and how people need it. Illinois Extension educators live and work in

your communities. We work to form strong partnerships with local leaders, businesses, schools, and residents in order to solve challenges and problems together.

This report reflects the work we do for the citizens in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties. Our programs impact all ages and backgrounds. We offer education that is current and practical for all residents, whether you live in rural or urban areas of the unit.

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

Ginger M. Boas  
County Extension Director



Cover: Top Right: Food donation gardens made a huge impact this year. Pictured is the Idea Garden veggie team with produce. Bottom Left: Jennifer Banda, LFSSF program coordinator, in the high tunnels at the Sustainable Student Farm showing a tomato harvested for summer tomato variety trials. Bottom Right: Savannah Hughes, Master Showmanship winner, and Olivia Shike, Reserve Champion of the Showmanship Classic, at the 2021 Champaign County 4-H Livestock Show.

# 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.



## Culture, cuisine and conversation: Travel the world with 4-H

The program had 50 participants from 4 Extension Units across the state. An evaluation was sent to participants who shared the following:

“I learned a lot about the cultures of other countries including a Korean game and a Finnish Christmas decoration.” • “I learned about various cultures and experienced many unique flavors.” • “Kitchens are a lot smaller in other parts of the world than in the US and food seems to be a lot fresher in other parts of the world.” • “I learned how to be a better cook.” • “I learned how to cook with ingredients I’ve never used before!”

Of Survey Respondents:

- 100% would recommend the program to friends
- 79% said this program gave them the opportunity to explore something they really care about
- 68% are passionate about the things they do in this program
- 58% want to learn all that they can about this topic
- 58% learned a new cooking skill or technique
- 58% like to learn about people who are different from themselves

Learning about cultures around the world allows youth to break down barriers and build bridges beyond their current social environment. However, because the current pandemic and high travel costs, traveling to experience these countries firsthand



4-Her, Annika Drasgow, shows off the Kimchi Stew she made as the group learned more about South Korea.

is often out of reach for youth. By providing opportunities for youth to connect with people in other countries, from other cultures, they develop empathy to understand others and see from their perspective. This allows them to interact in a diverse and global world.

Programs developed by local 4-H youth development educators in collaboration with three other 4-H youth development educators, program coordinators, and teen volunteers exposed youth to other cultures using cuisine and cooking. For each of the six weeks, a different country was featured. Educators created interactive presentations featuring facts, pictures, and cultural aspects of each country. Youth were able to watch videos made by actual people living in the countries. The videos showed actual kitchens, grocery stores and how to make a recipe from that country.

Before each group meeting every other week for six weeks, youth were encouraged to make a recipe from the country and post pictures on a website to share. Then when the group met virtually, everyone got to share their experiences and do an activity together. As part of the program, youth were given a snack or candy to try or an ingredient for the recipe. They were also given an activity or game from each country.



Alana Dolan, a local 4-H member, shows off the Finnish Piianpullat pastry.



[go.illinois.edu/cfiv4H](https://go.illinois.edu/cfiv4H)



## New 4-H opportunities

**eSports** – A new 4-H club has started in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties focusing on electronic sports or eSports. The eSports project centers around playing different electronic games competitively, either as a team or individually. The eSports club has five members and has recruited a brand new 4-H volunteer to lead the club. While the group has not had a chance to compete, they’ve been having a lot of fun learning and building teamwork.

**Vet Med Club** – The Vet Med Club started in late 2021 and has grown into a group of 4-H’ers ranging from 8 to 17. Many of the kids are planning to become veterinarians or work in animal care. Speakers from University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine each month allows youth to hear what their future career could be like. They do hands-on activities, such as vet tech skill training, wildlife rehabilitation exercise, and more.



Dr. Caroline Tonozzi DVM, DACVECC, helps Champaign County 4-H’er Katherine Kutz, of the Champaign Mixed Clovers, wrap a paw as the Vet Med Club learned about pet first aid in November 2021.

**Rainbow Readers** – The new Rainbow Readers 4-H Club is open to Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion youth. This club meets monthly to discuss books which have LGBTQ+ or People of Color main characters. The group has six members and has read four books. The reading selections have allowed members to hear stories from voices that aren’t always shared and lead to great conversations.

**Fabulous Fridays** – Champaign County 4-H has been participating in Booker T. Washington STEM Academy’s “Fabulous Fridays.” Offered every Friday, the students have experienced a wide range of activities to help develop cognitive and motor skills. Participating youth have done 4-H Yoga and made glitter calming jars to practice breathing and mindfulness. They learned about reindeer migration and how snow is formed, and then made snow globes out of plastic plates. They also learned how airplanes fly and were able to make paper airplanes to see the process in action.



Magdalena, 4-H Program Coordinator, demonstrates a downward-dog pose during 4-H Yoga with Booker T. Washington STEM Academy kindergartners.

Additional activities planned for this spring include electricity, horticulture, animal science, computer science, and more. Extension hopes to expand the activities by creating an in-person 4-H club led by Booker T. Washington faculty, with hopes of creating interest in 4-H and reach new audiences.



[go.illinois.edu/cfiv4H](https://go.illinois.edu/cfiv4H)



## Addressing food insecurity in local communities



Through partnerships, food donation gardens, and education about home food production, Extension is addressing food insecurity.

- Champaign - 11%
- Iroquois - 10.7%
- Ford - 12.3%
- Vermilion - 13.8%

Total people in all 4 counties food insecure is **38,540**

Master Gardeners continued to use their expertise in vegetable gardening to provide produce from community garden projects across Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties to those in need. These highly productive vegetable gardens provide a space for education and outreach programs while growing fresh produce for donation to help address food insecurity in communities. Across all gardens, over 4,200 pounds of produce was donated. Additionally, several new accomplishments in 2021 are noteworthy.

### Creation of a new garden in Iroquois County

Iroquois Memorial Hospital in Watseka explored opportunities to address food insecurity. They partnered with Extension Master Gardener Sally Mabbitt to begin a new garden focused on vegetable production. The vibrant and productive garden space consists of three large raised gardening beds in the courtyard of the hospital which can be seen from several of the long-term patient rooms. During the 2021 growing season, over 200 pounds of fresh vegetables were grown for the community. The project was such a huge success that a \$2,000 grant was received from the United Way for expansion in 2022.



Master Gardener, Sally Mabbitt, stands next to raised garden beds at Iroquois Memorial Hospital in Watseka. These productive vegetable gardens provided over 200 pounds of fresh produce in 2021.

### SNAP-Ed adds nutrition education to existing garden program in Champaign County

The established donation gardens at Crisis Nursery in Urbana, maintained by a group of Champaign County Master Gardeners, also added something new in 2021 when they partnered with the Extension SNAP-Ed to provide more education on nutrition. Master Gardeners taught Crisis Nursery clients how to plant and harvest carrots, offered tastings of veggies from the gardens, and maintained the beautiful and productive garden spaces. Crisis Nursery staff were trained by SNAP-Ed staff to teach clients about nutrition using the food donation garden as an outdoor classroom.

### Home-grown veggies boost Vermilion County production

Master Gardeners in Vermilion County continued vegetable production at existing community gardens, including those at Kennekuk County Park, Douglas Discovery Garden, and VA Illiana Health Care System and the Garden Share program. Garden Share allows Master Gardeners to use their home gardens to grow food for donation. Participants dedicate a specific area of their garden as their donation area and receive volunteer hours while working in this space. They also deliver the food to food pantries or shelters near where they live. The Vermilion County Master Gardeners program donated over 3,000 pounds of produce.



Master Gardener, Audrey Rowe, sorts vegetables that were grown as part of the Garden Share program in Vermilion County



8

Food Donation Gardens, Supported by Extension staff and volunteers



4,210

Pounds Donated, Volume of produce donated to local communities



\$6,062.40

Value of Donated Food, Based on average value of \$1.44 per pound



Master Naturalist and Geologist, Joan Crockett, leads a field activity exploring the geology of Kickapoo State Park.



## Thinking outside the classroom

The Master Naturalist training course left the classroom this year and returned to nature in order to comply with COVID-19 in-person meeting restrictions. This shift was also in response to requests for a more flexible training schedule and additional hands-on activities in the field.



The traditional training was modified to become a hybrid version which included self-study assignments, online meetings for discussion, and guided field activities to reinforce concepts participants explored during self-study. The course, divided into six units, focused on a specific set of topics which students learned over a two-week period. The self-study materials included readings, recorded webinars, podcasts, activities, and other materials. Students could choose among the various materials to achieve the learning objectives for each unit, which allowed each person to tailor the course to their individual interests and learning styles. This period of self-study was followed by a guided hike at local natural areas where Extension staff and local experts helped students explore the concepts they were learning with hands-on experiences in local natural areas. Each unit culminated in an online discussion to review the subject matter and reinforce learning objectives. Local experts, program partners, and sponsors joined the discussions to answer questions and update participants on current projects.



Master Naturalist Trainees observe bird species in Crystal Lake Park.

I appreciated having the guest scientists present. Add them to the large number of trainees who already know enough about the natural world to ask advanced questions, and one has an even more enriching conversation.



**10,924**  
Volunteer Hours



**\$305,653.52**  
Value of services performed by volunteers



**141**  
East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Volunteers

This is ... useful, delightful, and occasionally sobering information I will return to and re-learn many times...



Master Naturalist Trainees worked in groups throughout the training to create a hands-on activity which could be used in the future for outreach. One group created a card game matching pollinators with their preferred native plant.



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



## Rainscaping makes its Illinois debut

Annual rainfall amounts in Illinois have increased in recent years, adding to the strain on aging stormwater systems across the state. Scientists at the University of Illinois have attributed this increase to the effects of global warming and this trend is expected to continue in coming years.

In response to the growing need for more efficient stormwater solutions, the Illinois Extension team, in partnership with Purdue Extension, launched the Rainscaping training program in Illinois. Several educators around the state were trained by Purdue specialists and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant staff. As a result, 5 trainings were held across Illinois this summer and spring. Two of the trainings occurred in Champaign County and were open to the public.

This unique course offers practical rain garden design techniques which can be applied in most residential or urban settings. Class participants learn how to measure storm runoff and appropriately size rain gardens to more efficiently convey stormwater. The training focuses on the use of native plants which are efficient rain garden components as well as valuable ecological reservoirs that boost wildlife benefits while reducing runoff volume. Rain gardens also lower pollutant loads by slowing the delivery of nutrients to local streams.

We targeted city officials, park managers, HOA managers, and our volunteers. In total, 15 people participated in our in-person training and 8 people participated in the online training. Program evaluations indicated participants gained knowledge, enjoyed the program, and had intent to implement the practices they learned.



23

Participants completed in-person or online Rainscaping



2

New rain gardens installed or improved as part of the Rainscaping Course



Each training included the installation of a raingarden. Layne Knoche, Visiting Extension Outreach Associate, is inspecting the water flow of the newly installed raingarden outside of Presby Hall on the Urbana-Champaign campus.



[purdue.edu/fnr/extension/scep/programs/rainscaping-education/](http://purdue.edu/fnr/extension/scep/programs/rainscaping-education/)

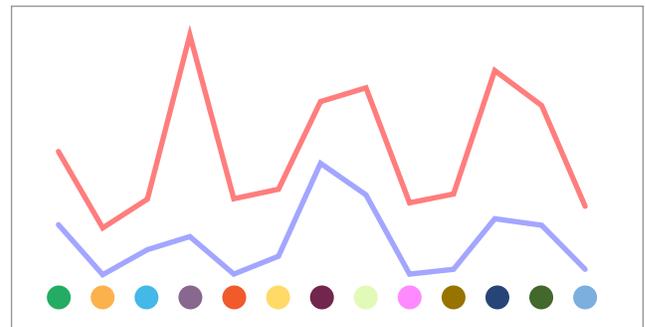
## Extension Volunteers create opportunities with remote outreach activities



This past fall, a group of Champaign County Master Gardeners were honored to receive the Statewide Teamwork Award for their efforts on social media. As the pandemic has limited our ability to meet in person and connect with other gardeners, this group has capitalized on the opportunity to reach gardening folks digitally.

Remotely connecting with others interested in gardening and natural resources has been a trend across our volunteer projects in 2021. Our talented volunteers in both the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs have gained experience in digital delivery of programs, with much of our continuing education offered online in the past year. All of these programs have been edited and made available on our YouTube channels so a larger group of community members can view the recorded programs.

Master Gardeners have carefully planned and assembled “Garden to Go” kits to provide take-home activities when in-person events were not possible. On other projects, lessons and supporting materials have been adapted for remote delivery by the staff of partner organizations when Master Gardeners could not access participants directly or digitally. All in all, our volunteers have made a huge impact while staying socially distant over the past year and we continue to see innovation across their projects for the coming year.



Reach

Number of Posts

8,845	12	Fall Garden Planting & Care
2,032	4	Seed Starting
4,340	8	Vegetable Gardening
19,231	10	Invasives
4,285	4	Planting Perennials
5,265	7	Lawn Care
13,507	22	Plant Spotlight Series
14,377	17	Gardening for Wildlife (birds and pollinators)
4,103	4	Soil Care
4,771	5	Tree Planting and Care
16,239	13	IPM and Diseases
12,815	12	Summer Gardening and Care
3,742	5	Houseplants



## Native plants in our communities

Native plants have a huge impact in the landscape as they support our native wildlife much better than non-natives, which have traditionally comprised most urban plantings. Across Extension programs, native plants have taken center stage as we all work toward more ecologically valuable landscapes, as well as more resilient native plant communities in natural areas.

In 2020, Extension volunteers continued to integrate native plants into community gardens across Unit 13. From the continued addition of native plants at the Idea Garden and Red Oak Rain Garden on University of Illinois campus to natives showcased in a section of our garden at the Onarga Library in Iroquois County, these plants serve as examples for outreach activities and educational materials posted in our gardens. With the help of both Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers, a new native plant trial garden was established in the University of Illinois Arboretum this year to showcase landscape designs from existing Extension brochures. All these plantings serve as living examples for community members to view and integrate into their home garden spaces.



Native plants are thriving in the Hartley Trial Garden at the University of Illinois Arboretum.



[go.illinois.edu/sun-pollinator-garden](https://go.illinois.edu/sun-pollinator-garden)



## Master Naturalists help native plant diversity by removing non-natives

The East Central Illinois Master Naturalists (ECIMN) continued their incredibly valuable work helping native plants thrive in natural areas across central Illinois. This motivated group of volunteers contributed over 4,000 hours of work dedicated toward stewardship activities in native plant communities. While their focus was promoting natives, their work primarily centered on the removal of non-native, invasive plants which outcompete our native plants and crowd them out of natural areas. Together with our ECIMN program partners, the Master Naturalists provided a huge boost to native plant diversity by removing these unwanted invaders.



## Intergenerational native landscaping project

The Onarga Library lost their shade garden after a 2020 storm. They asked the Ford-Iroquois Master Gardeners (FIMG's) to act as consultants and help them create a new landscape design. The request was for a low maintenance, environmentally friendly, attractive front entrance with potential for educational programs. The FIMG's did plant research, met with the Library Board several times, created a landscape design and were available on planting days to offer instructions on how to do this correctly. Plans were made for planting days to include Cub Scouts, library staff, and Master Gardeners. Native plants were used as much as possible.



Ford Iroquois Master Gardener, Mary Dickenson teaches Cub Scout Chase Honeycutt how to plant transplants. Chase and other Cub Scouts assisted the Master Gardeners in replanting the newly designed garden in the front of the Onarga Public Library.

## Tree and shrub sale boosts native plant populations

Each year, our Master Naturalist volunteers have organized a native tree and shrub sale with growing success. This year, over 400 native plants were sent home with 100 families as the Urbana Park District (UPD) served as our host for the sale in October. In partnership with UPD and the Master Gardeners, a vibrant "Oaktobefest" event was organized at a neighboring UPD park on the day of plant pickup. Families visiting UPD to take home their plants, along with other community members, enjoyed a variety of educational activities focused on native plants and animals for both youth and adults alike. Illinois Extension and UPD staff provided several tree planting demonstrations to answer any questions the new plant owners might have, while everyone involved contributed to a native tree walk around the park.



## Encouraging family conversations about money



Talking about money is a topic for all ages, including children. Learning about healthy financial habits at a young age can set a child up for success for their future. Extension's educational programming this past year included working with youth across in a variety of settings.

At community events Extension provided over 100 families with picture book reading guides. The guides provide hints for parents on how to share the money-themed picture books' content with their children. In addition, over 200 eighth graders from Franklin Middle School, Champaign, attended a three-session online webinar series. The students' engagement was high; over 65% of the eighth graders participated in the online polls during the webinars.

## Financial education for young adults

Consumer Economics is uniquely situated to reach young adult audiences with timely information. Many young adults are in the midst of life transitions, and money is often a big piece of those transitions. The consumer economics team provides programming in different ways to reach young adults.

The Get Savvy webinar series, coordinated by University of Illinois Extension and University of Illinois System Student Money Management Center, with the Illinois Division of Financial and Professional Regulation and other college partners from across the state, aims to educate and empower viewers about important financial topics. 2021's lineup included nine webinars which hosted 792 participants. The three webinars with the highest attendance and interest were:

- Tackling Taxes
- Investing Basics
- Save Money on Food

In 2021, 13 college students with an interest in personal finance completed an on-campus internship with Illinois Extension, in partnership with UIUC's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics. The students provided financial education outreach by meeting with college students to answer money questions, writing educational blog posts, updating educational resources, and presenting personal finance workshops. In addition, they produced a podcast and video in collaboration with the McKinley Health Center.

Social media is used to share links to financial education events and resources, as well as motivate young adults to take control of their finances. Some of the most popular topics in 2021 included financial technology, protecting against fraud, and comparing financial institutions.



## Money Mentors participants change financial behaviors

The Money Mentors program continues to help Illinois community members in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties reach their financial goals through targeted, volunteer-based financial education and coaching. Community members who want help reaching their financial goals receive free help from Money Mentors volunteers. The top topics participants wanted to discuss in 2021 include:

- Money Management and Budgeting
- Saving and Getting Ahead
- Student Loans
- Organizing Finances
- Debt Repayment

Money Mentor volunteers complete a final report after mentoring concludes. From the 59 reports provided, the data shows that mentoring helped mentee participants' financial situations improve: emergency and long-term savings increased and debt was decreased.

This program serves a diverse group of participants. The median income range is between \$25,000 - \$34,999, with incomes ranging below \$15,000 to over \$150,000 annually. The median participant age is 28 years old, with participants ranging from late teens to into their 70s.



792

Participants joined Get Savvy webinars to learn about personal finance



2,025

Views of recorded webinars



5,104

Views in 2021 of the *Be Centsible* blog, written by college students for college students.



49

Volunteers trained for the Money Mentors Volunteer Program



179

Participants matched with a volunteer money mentor



9,161

People reached with Financial Wellness for College Students' social media accounts



[go.illinois.edu/Consumer-Economics](https://go.illinois.edu/Consumer-Economics)



## EFNEP Annual Report 2021

EFNEP was the nation's first federal nutrition education program. It has successfully balanced constancy and change to improve the food and physical activity behaviors of low-income families and youth. In 1969, teaching was conducted one-on-one in the home. Today, our community worker staff meet with families and youth in a variety of locations and use multiple interactive learning approaches to teach people in the context of their lives, either in person or virtually.

Nationally, EFNEP reaches roughly a half a million low-income adults and low-income families each year. Routinely, 80 percent or more EFNEP families report living at or below 100 percent of poverty and 70 percent indicate being of minority status. Chronic disease and poor health disproportionately affects minority and low-income audiences. Annual data confirms that graduates from the EFNEP program improve their diets, improve their nutrition practices, stretch their food dollars farther, handle food more safely, and increase their physical activity levels.

Community and other partners are critical to EFNEP's success. Coordination and collaboration with community partners enhance participants' success. Extensive networking and cooperation with other agencies and organizations increases program reach and educational opportunities. With the continued presence of the pandemic, many agencies and organizations that we have previously been involved with are still not open to the public for classes. We continue to try to provide classes virtually to those partners that are capable, and we offer whatever needed resources to their participants that will be most beneficial.

We have had a few participants express some of their thoughts and changes that they have experienced due to the result of our classes that they had attended. These included:

A 28-year-old married father of 2 young children thanked the staff for teaching him about fruits and vegetables and providing the recipe booklet. He has made the beef stir fry multiple times, as well as other recipes that his family loves. He appreciated the information on how to shop for food better so that they could save some money. He said that he and his wife are happy saving money now, just by making a list and sticking to it when shopping so they can stay on a budget.

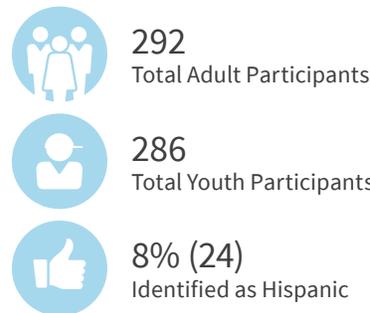
A mother in one of our classes took home the simple green smoothie recipe to her kids, and they loved it. It will replace the sugary drinks they have when they get home from school. They couldn't taste the spinach when it smells like apples & bananas. She told the staff that it was a good way to get her kids to eat a vegetable that they didn't want to try before.

Another staff member shared this story of hers: "I was shopping at a local grocery store. As I was grabbing a half-gallon of 1% milk from the dairy case, a young man approached me. 'Hello ma'am, you taught my group nutrition classes at Lincoln's Challenge!' He then introduced me to his mother, with whom he was shopping. 'Oh, my goodness,' she told me, 'I can't go to a grocery store without him. He always insists on comparing the fat, sugar, and sodium content on every product that we buy, if it's too high, it goes back on the shelf.'"

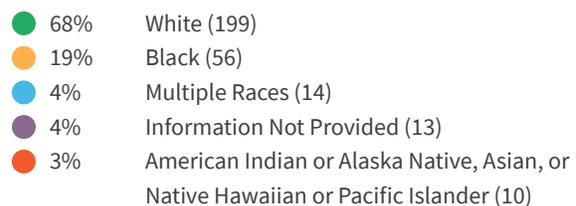
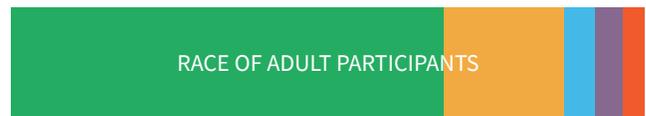
She went on to tell me how many changes her household had made because of what her son had learned from our Teen Cuisine classes at Lincoln's Challenge. She confided in me that they now ate most dinners together as a family and have two days a week for the family to engage in physical activities together. She is active as a parent of elementary school-aged children and asked how to get some of this same programming at their school. I was so excited that I immediately provided her with information that she requested!"

## 2021 EFNEP Participants

### Serving Local Families



### Our Community Partners



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



## Life's Moments: From memory to legacy

Do you ever look back at the multiple places you have been, the decades lived, the characters that have filled your life? And what story do you retell over and over? Many people come to our lifestory writing class to write their history for their families and loved ones. Many get much more from the multi-session experience. Through writing prompts and memory triggers, they share a piece of themselves with others who start as strangers and leave as friends. We find common threads between our varied paths. Chelsey Byers has been teaching lifestory writing since 2008, and it is still one of her favorite programs to lead. Here are some impacts from participants to share:

“Thanks so much for the great job all of you did in planning, organizing, and conducting this workshop. The sessions were interesting and thought-provoking, and hearing stories the other participants shared invariably triggered even more memories for me. As a result of this workshop, I have set a goal to write at least 15 minutes every day. Writing prompts are very beneficial in helping me actually write instead of just staring at a blank computer screen.”

“I’m working on my family history - still. I hope when I pass it around to relatives, they, like me, I will continue to update and add to it; that is why I’m putting it in a very large three-ring notebook so I can insert items or rearrange material as needed. Family history is meant to be continued.”

“Thanks to you and your team, I was motivated to complete four books in time for Christmas this year. Your Zoom class was just the inspiration and encouragement I needed. My family was thrilled with the outcome, and I was very happy to give them something that they can enjoy and pass along to their children.”

In addition to offering this program virtually here in Illinois, Chelsey Byers is expanding its reach across the Midwest. She trained Extension staff at two Land Grant institutions in Ohio, Ohio State University and Central State University, on this program.

## Workforce preparedness and advancement



Each year, Extension collaborates with students on campus to aid their professional development. This past year, Chelsey Byers and Emily Harmon hosted three University of Illinois interns. Two were Interdisciplinary Health Sciences students, and one was a Community Health student.

The fall intern, Alexis Sanders, created a social media campaign between the winter holidays and the new year. Her posts focused on helping families focus their time together, their health, and relationships when more people are spending time together.

Chelsey and Emily also collaborate with students through the Community Seminar Series. This collaborative series is hosted by the Illinois Health Sciences Institute Three educational series: Springtime Science, Summer Self-Care, and Autumn Health Picks, were presented. The program included 21 different students from various colleges and backgrounds through these three series. IHSI and the students hosted 24 sessions with Extension, reaching 3,265 participants.

- 82% of participants reported an increase in knowledge after attending the programs.
- 67% said yes or maybe about making a change to their daily life as a result of attending the webinar

“They are very interesting, and I learn a lot from them. I miss them when they are not on. Thank you for helping us be knowledgeable on so many topics.”

In addition to teaching the students about science communication and delivering community programs, we offered them the opportunity to blog and develop infographics. Three graduate students learned about infographics, and four students learned about blogging.



## Wits Workout

Last year we highlighted the development of Wits Workout. Sometimes it is hard to launch a program in a pandemic; however, that has not stopped Extension! This year, the unit hosted three of ten locations in Wits Workout's statewide rollout, reaching rural and urban participants. Wits Workout is an interactive multi-session program that teaches lifestyle factors impacting brain health.

Post-session surveys showed that:

- **64%** of participants said that they learned new information
- Nearly **60%** of participants described an increase in socialization
- Nearly **60%** of participants reported that they learned helpful hints to help with remembering daily

In addition, Extension received a grant through the Roybal Center for Dissemination and Implementation Science through University of Illinois Chicago for nearly \$50,000 to evaluate the program. Chelsey Byers is a collaborator on this research with Julie Bobitt, Center for Dissemination and Implementation Science, UIC; Neha Goethe, Department of Kinesiology & Community Health, UIUC; and Laura Payne, Ph.D. - Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, UIUC.



Family and Consumer Sciences Program Coordinator, Emily Harmon, facilitating Wits Wellness.

## Extension rallies to combat farm stress

Illinois Extension has focused on farmers and their families to help them deal with stress and mental health issues. The efforts include compiling resources at the ready for farm families to access, developing training for counselors to understand the burdens of farm families, and offering training across the state to help identify when someone may need additional assistance. Check out the resources that have been developed by family life educators and specialists on campus:

Check out the newsletter & subscribe at the bottom  
[go.illinois.edu/Farm-Stress-AssistanceCenter](https://go.illinois.edu/Farm-Stress-AssistanceCenter)

<https://farmstress.org>

[go.illinois.edu/Farm-Stress-Resources](https://go.illinois.edu/Farm-Stress-Resources)



## Family Life by the numbers



**51**  
Educational sessions offered



**4,285**  
Participants reached



**19**  
Number of states delivering Wits Workout



**477**  
People subscribed to Extending Wellness program



**58**  
Local businesses subscribe to the monthly worksite wellness publication Breakroom Buzz



**53**  
Facebook posts with a reach of over 2,000 people



[go.illinois.edu/Family-Life](https://go.illinois.edu/Family-Life)

## SNAP-Ed

In 2021, the SNAP-Education team continued to adapt and find ways continue to create and maintain community collaborations, increase food access, and improve diet quality and increase physical activity to reduce obesity for limited-resource individuals and families despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Classes were held both virtually and in-person. The team was able to find new ways to teach classes in-person while being COVID-19 safe.



The Champaign County team taught Illinois Junior Chef classes this summer. The team developed a new partnership with the Rantoul Public Library. The library was excited to have the team conduct classes at their facility. The Champaign County team prepared kits for each lesson for each youth which included individually wrapped food and their own cooking utensils for Illinois Junior Chef lessons. The youth were excited to participate in the cooking classes and learn new recipes.



During one lesson, they prepared the Tic Tac Taco Mix recipe. One youth went home and made the recipe with her father and said they also experimented with other seasonings, as well.

The Champaign County team also had an Eat Move Save booth at the Champaign Farmers Market this year. The team made COVID-19 safe food samples by packing food in individual cups and distributing them at the market. Guests taste tested a healthy recipe made with produce from the market and were able to learn about healthy eating and physical activity. One Farmers Market guest told the team that she was excited to come by the Eat Move Save booth each week to try the sample and learn about the health topic for the week. The guest mentioned that she always thought she did not like radishes, but she tried sautéed radishes, and, to her surprise, she loved it. She thanked the team for introducing her to a new food. Another guest said they love having the website as a resource for tasty and healthy recipes.



The Vermilion County team developed a new partnership this year with iGrow, a program that promotes healthy parent-child relationships. The Eat Play Grow curriculum, an early childhood curriculum that teaches children along with their parent about nutrition and physical activity choices was a perfect fit for the iGrow program. Extension adapted the class for a virtual setting by using Facebook Live in a private group. One parent shared that she has become more conscious with what she is purchasing at the grocery store, purchasing more fruits and vegetable and leaving the cookies and doughnuts on the shelf. The mother said her children asked why they were purchasing so many carrots, and she replied, “because we are going to eat them.” The SNAP-Ed team plans to continue the partnership and teach more classes to the parents and children.

The SNAP-Ed Policy System and Environment team also continued finding new ways to implement obesity prevention strategies. Many food pantries switched to drive through distributions due to COVID-19. The team worked with food pantries to pack healthy pantry box and implemented a “meal bundle in a box” by using items from the food pantry and a recipe from the Eat Move Save website. The team also worked with the Eastern Illinois Foodbank to receive a list of commodities that the food pantries would be receiving each month in order to help the pantries prepare for upcoming meal bundles. Wesley Food Pantry stated that their clients enjoyed getting the meal kits. The pantry asked their clients to make the recipe and share it on social media.



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



## STAFF

Ginger Boas  
County Extension Director

Randal Barton  
Business Manager

Chelsey Byers  
Family Life Educator

Betty Gavin  
EFNEP Educator

Stephanie Acevedo  
SNAP-Ed Educator

Erin Harper  
Local Food Systems  
and Small Farms Educator

Myla Munro  
4-H Youth Development  
Educator

Mynda Tracy  
4-H Youth Development  
Educator

Ryan Pankau  
Extension Educator,  
Horticulture

Herbert Chavez Diaz  
Marketing and  
Communications Program  
Coordinator

Tracy Bowden  
SNAP-Ed Program Coordinator

Amanda Bryant Brown  
4-H Youth Development  
Program Coordinator

Amanda Christenson  
Master Naturalist Program  
Coordinator

Tabitha Lea Elder  
Program Coordinator,  
Horticulture

Jenney Hanrahan  
Horticulture Program  
Coordinator

Jaide Jamison  
Fiscal Associate

Emily Harmon  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
Program Coordinator

Magdalena Casper-Shipp  
4-H Youth Development  
Program Coordinator

Jennifer Banda  
Local Food Systems & Small  
Farms, Program Coordinator

Kathy Sweedler  
Consumer Economics  
Educator

Brooke Shrewsbury  
Consumer Economics Program  
Coordinator

Delinda Hauan  
Vermilion County SNAP-Ed  
Community Worker

Jaime Holland  
Champaign County EFNEP  
Community Worker

Kathy Miller  
Champaign County EFNEP  
Community Worker

Khadiga Mohamed  
Champaign County EFNEP  
Community Worker

Sheri Walker  
Vermilion County SNAP-Ed  
Community Worker

Janet Wright  
Vermilion County SNAP-Ed  
Community Worker

Deborah Mikel  
EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Office  
Support Associate

Jake Keister  
Office Support Associate

Della Jacobs  
Champaign County SNAP-Ed  
Community Worker

Deosia Miller  
Champaign County EFNEP  
Community Worker

Rey Dalitto  
SNAP-Ed Program Coordinator

Pam Munro  
Office Support Associate

Molly Kipfer  
Extension Program  
Coordinator

Larry Haigh  
Extension Program  
Coordinator

Brittney Shipley  
EFNEP Community Worker

Marisol Hughes  
EFNEP Community Worker

Tonya Bernstein  
Office Support Associate

## OFFICE INFORMATION

**Champaign Office**  
801 N. Country Fair Dr. Suite D,  
Champaign, IL 61821  
(217) 333-7672

**INEP Office**  
201 W. Kenyon Rd. Suite 3  
Champaign, IL 61820  
(217) 353-0740

**Vermilion Office**  
3164 N. Vermilion  
Danville, IL 61832  
(217) 442-8615

**Ford-Iroquois Office**  
916 W. Seminary Ave.  
Onarga, IL 60955  
(815) 268-4051

## ONLINE



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# Illinois Extension

### College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

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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.

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