



# 2017 Impact Report

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION  
SERVING CHAMPAIGN, FORD,  
IROQUOIS, AND VERMILION COUNTIES

**I ILLINOIS**

Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES





# ILLINOIS

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### A Note from the Director

Throughout 2017, University of Illinois Extension serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties had the pleasure of serving over 40,000 people through our programming. Through over 750 programs focused on education in the areas of consumer

economics, family life, nutrition, horticulture, agriculture, and youth development, our staff has helped make positive changes in our community by enriching the lives of those we have taught and interacted with throughout the year.

University of Illinois Extension's motto is to extend knowledge and change lives. Our staff do this on a daily basis by providing practical education to individuals, businesses, and communities throughout East Central Illinois. Whether they be in an urban or rural setting, with children or aging adults, or to those with access to many or little resources, the programs implemented by our staff help make extensive research from top professionals at the university available to the public in a way that is accessible and easy to implement in their own lives.

While there is not nearly enough room in this report to describe each of the hundreds of programs we have held during the last year, nor each of the lives our programs have helped change for the better, we hope that you will find the information in this report valuable in capturing a snapshot of the work we do and why it matters.

We are humbled to be able to have the opportunity to provide positive change within our community, and we thank you for the support you have provided our organization so that we can continue to do so moving forward. Thanks to the support we receive from our community, stakeholders, and program attendees, we can continue to make a difference for those through East Central Illinois while truly extending knowledge and changing lives.

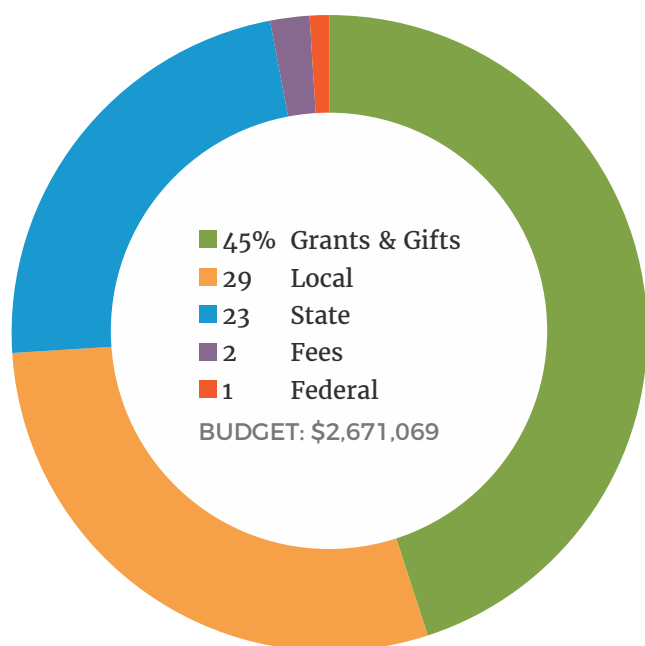
University of Illinois Extension  
Serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion Counties





## Financial Report

U of I Extension Serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties has been skilled in acquiring a number of grants and gifts to help us flourish from year to year. Additionally, we receive a large amount of funding from the local level, including from county boards, as well as from the state.



University of Illinois Extension Serving Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties provides countless opportunities for growth throughout our communities, leading to positive change and development in the lives of those we serve.

## Extending Knowledge, Changing Lives in 2017

### Programs



**750**  
Programs led  
by unit staff and  
volunteers

### Volunteers



**50,000**  
Hours of work  
contributed by our  
volunteers

### People



**40,000**  
People directly  
reached through  
our programming

### Web



**2.4M**  
Page views on the  
CFIV unit website

### Video



**83,300**  
Minutes watched  
by viewers of our  
educational videos





## Money Mentors assist hundreds in our communities

In a roomy but intimate classroom in Champaign this past summer, 12 adults sat in a circle, discussing finances, personalities, and volunteering. After six weeks of training, this group graduated to become Money Mentors, trained volunteers who meet one-on-one with community members (mentees) who need help with their finances.

The Money Mentor prides itself in the diverse makeup of its mentors. Recent graduate Sam Celmer feels that the diversity of mentors is one of the best things about the program. “I think that our diversity will be really beneficial to mentees since we all have different interests and backgrounds,” says Celmer.

While Celmer and all the other mentors have very diverse backgrounds, they all share one common goal—to help our community. When asked what she was most excited about when she officially became a Money Mentor, Celmer was all smiles as she explained, “This program just feels like such a good thing to be a part of.” This enthusiasm is justified. Just last year, 57 Money Mentors met with 121 people and contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to our communities.

This year, a mentor helped a woman get out of debt and become financially independent after her husband died. In another instance, a mentor’s advice helped a couple pay off their car and other debts. These success stories show how a little bit of guidance can have a major impact on the lives of those in our communities.



Consumer Economics educator Kathy Sweedler led two Money Mentor training sessions in 2017, and 57 mentors met with 120 people throughout the area.



Peer educators help thousands of students understand their finances. One peer educator says, “Being a peer educator is the proudest thing I do at U of I.”

## Consumer Economics

University of Illinois Extension’s consumer economics programs help youth and adults alike learn the skills they need to increase savings, manage spending, and reduce debt. This education leads to economic stability throughout our communities.

### 2017 Highlights



**14,000**

Students reached through the Financial Wellness program.



**15,000**

Views to 33 new columns on the “Plan Well, Retire Well” blog.



**10,000**

People enrolled in the “Financial Planning for Young Adults” online course.

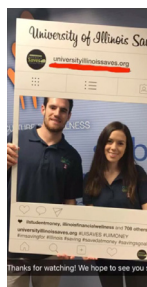
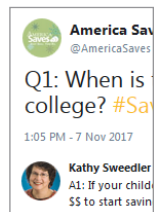


**120**

Mentees met with by 57 Money Mentors throughout East Central Illinois.

### Innovative Economic Education in 2017

Kathy Sweedler was a guest for America Saves’ College Savings #SavesChat on Twitter. Over 100 people contributed to the discussion and 695 tweets were sent. Over 220,000 Twitter accounts were reached with 3,400,000 impressions.



Financial Wellness peer educators took over the University of Illinois’ Snapchat account to promote the program and teach how to set a S.M.A.R.T. goal. Over 3,000 people viewed the snaps. Additionally, several students contacted the peer educators for more information after the takeover.





## Family Life

Adults, caregivers, professional staff, and others who participate in Family Life programs develop skills in healthy lifestyle decisions, effective family communication, and management of life transitions. These skills increase the vitality of our communities.

### 2017 Highlights



**3,260**

Participants in 2017. This number is made of 3,060 adults and 200 youth.



**540,000**

Views on the "Family Files" blog since 2014. 48 posts were written in 2017.



**68**

Educational sessions in 2017, including two completely filled brain health series.



**2**

National conferences presented at American Society on Aging and National Health Outreach.



### TAKING INITIATIVE TO SERVE THE AGING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

To better serve individuals in our communities, it is important to find out their needs and identify ways to solve them. To begin this process, we assisted with two data collection efforts in 2017.

The Age Friendly CU survey looked at aging resources in Champaign-Urbana. Because of this survey, in March Champaign-Urbana was accepted into AARP and World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Communities. To see the full report, visit [go.illinois.edu/AFCU](http://go.illinois.edu/AFCU).

The second effort, done through the North Central Region Aging Network, identified aging-related needs and the status of Extension programming. This twelve-state assessment identified current and future needs. To view the results summary, visit [go.illinois.edu/NCRAN](http://go.illinois.edu/NCRAN)



In "Caregiving Concerns with Chelsey," Family Life educator Chelsey Byers Gerstenecker offers education online, extending knowledge to those who may be unable to attend one of our in-person trainings.

### Educator takes learning online through web series

In an ever-changing technological environment, reaching our audiences in new ways is imperative. This shift is even more important for educating those who cannot attend traditional programming, such as caregivers. Often, caregivers cannot leave their loved one or are working full time while caregiving, giving them little time for education.

According to the Illinois Department on Aging, 25 percent of all family households are providing some form of caregiving. Of this number, unpaid family and friends are providing 85 percent of the care. Often, these individuals are untrained but could benefit greatly from education, guidance, and reassurance.

To help these caregivers, in 2017 we created the video series, "Caregiving Concerns with Chelsey." Through this series, Family Life educator Chelsey Byers Gerstenecker created 10 two-minute videos. Topics of importance to caregivers are covered, such as managing medication, communicating with doctors, dealing with disagreements, and more. The series has accumulated over 2,000 views on Facebook and YouTube.

Through these videos, caregivers who may not be able to attend traditional classes are receiving valuable information they can use directly in their caregiving, thus improving the lives of themselves and their loved ones.



View this informational series at [go.illinois.edu/CaregivingConcerns](http://go.illinois.edu/CaregivingConcerns)





## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education)

SNAP-Education works with limited-resource audiences to make healthier choices where they eat, shop, live, play, and learn in their communities. Through classes and workshops, and by working towards policy, system, and environmental changes, SNAP-Education positively impacts the nutrition and activity choices of the people and communities we serve.

### Serving Local Residents



**13,488**

Total SNAP-Ed Participants



**6,358 (47%)**  
Adults



**7,130 (53%)**  
Youth



**2,094 (16%)**

Participants Who Identified as Hispanic

#### RACE OF PARTICIPANTS

- 64% White (8,691)
- 33% Black (4,443)
- 3% American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (354)

### Our Partners



**25**

K-12 Schools



**2**

Stores or Markets



**11**

Youth Centers



**13**

Community Centers



**24**

Early Childhood Centers



**24**

Food Pantries and Food Banks

**Teens will find themselves feeling healthier and ready to take on the rest of the school day.**

## Smarter Lunchrooms lead to healthier teens in Rantoul

As part of the Smarter Lunchrooms initiative, SNAP-Ed educator Caitlin Kownacki and program coordinator Jenny Spinks worked with Rantoul Township High School's cafeteria director Luanna Williams. The goal: to give the school café a healthy vibe while connecting it with the rest of the school.

To create this transformation, Kownacki, Spinks, and Williams gave the café a food-court feel complete with stations where the teens could grab a bite to eat. Modern, sleek signs were designed and hung with large fonts that read "Quick," "Hot," and "Fresh." These signs incorporated school colors as well as photos of fresh, nutritious food to try to steer the youth in the direction of choosing healthy foods.

Several other Smarter Lunchrooms initiatives were completed for the cafeteria, including creating a spice station to encourage teens to create robust flavors using fewer calories and arranging drink coolers so water was more easily accessible.

New daily food choices have been added to the menu, including grilled chicken sandwiches. Williams also plans to provide grab-and-go fresh fruit and vegetable options for students.

With these new changes, teens at Rantoul Township High School will find themselves feeling healthier and ready to take on the rest of the school day. Nutrition education can now extend past health class into the lunchroom as well.







## Market to MyPlate connects SNAP recipients to healthy food and nutrition education

According to Feeding America, in East Central Illinois one in seven individuals struggles with hunger. In Champaign County alone, nearly 35,000 adults and children live in food insecure homes.

Last summer, staff in the areas of INEP, Consumer Economics, and Horticulture teamed up to create “Market to MyPlate,” a program to help members of our community learn about how to prepare healthy food using fresh vegetables. This program used hands-on education to teach participants how to prepare meals with vegetables found at the market, create a food budget, and take advantage of resources available to SNAP recipients, such as the Champaign Farmers’ Market’s SNAP matching funds.

In this free program, SNAP-eligible participants and their families each week cooked a new recipe using in-season veggies. At the end of each program, they received a basket of vegetables to take home to continue healthy cooking.

Participants left the program feeling empowered through their new knowledge to cook healthy food for their families. A child of a program participant shared how he and his family have been eating healthier meals because of the program, stating, “Mommy made a stir fry and it was really good! I didn’t know I liked vegetables that much!”

Providing this education has enriched the lives of the participants, helping them and their families eat healthier despite limited budgets.

**I didn’t know I liked vegetables that much!**  
**CHILD OF A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT**

Fifty-one people participated in the pilot Market to MyPlate program in 2017.



## Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

In Champaign and Vermilion Counties, EFNEP staff members serve limited-resource families to help make the healthy choice the easy choice, even on a budget. Through hands-on classes that focus on improving eating habits and physical activity, EFNEP makes a difference in the lives of those we serve.

### Serving Local Residents



**938**

Total Adult Participants



**1,952**

Total Youth Participants



**41 (4%)**

Participants Who Identified as Hispanic

#### RACE OF PARTICIPANTS

- 49% White (455)
- 42% Black (394)
- 9% American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (89)

### Our Partners



**18**

K-12 Schools



**14**

Youth Centers



**8**

Food Pantries or Food Banks



**27**

Community Centers





## Idea Garden takes major step in accessibility

In 2017, after nearly eight years of planning and fundraising, the Champaign Master Gardener Idea Garden took a major step in accessibility.

The Champaign County Master Gardeners celebrated the completion of the Accessibility Project with a ribbon cutting on Aug. 31. Seventy-five Master Gardeners and supporters of the project from various organizations attended the event, which included garden tours on the new sidewalks.

Over \$140,000 was raised for the Accessibility Project, which now allows people with limited mobility to access the Idea Garden's 15,000 square feet of annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees.

Sandra Casserly, an Idea Garden visitor and project supporter, expressed her delight in the ability to traverse the garden. "I'm so happy that a dear friend pushed me around the Idea Garden thanks to the new sidewalks. I hadn't been there for many years because I couldn't walk the distance with my walker. I praise the Master Gardeners for the great accomplishment of sidewalks!"

Thanks to the organizations and individuals that made this project a success, now many more visitors to the Idea Garden will be able to enjoy its beauty and be inspired by Master Gardeners' hard work.



Sandra Mason, assisted by Master Gardener Jana Waite, Director George Czapar, Master Gardener Anne Hudson, Ginger Boas, and Dean Kim Kidwell, cuts the ribbon to commemorate the opening of the new accessible sidewalks at the Idea Garden.

## Horticulture

University of Illinois Extension's horticulture programming helps create more beautiful communities while saving natural resources and preserving natural areas. Our programs ensure that everyone can enjoy nature and access to nutritious vegetation.

### 2017 Highlights



**34,000**

Volunteer hours completed by our Master Gardener and Master Naturalists. These hours are valued at \$820,000.



**737**

Active participants in the Master Gardener programs and Master Naturalist programs.



**3,500**

People attended over 50 horticulture programs, including nearly 1,500 people who came to Garden Walks in Champaign, Danville, and Gibson City.



**500**

Veterans in Vermilion County received horticulture therapy through our partnership with the VA in Danville.



This year, 34 Master Naturalists graduated training to enter the program. East Central Illinois Master Naturalists have contributed over 60,000 hours of service valued at \$2 million to central Illinois since they were established in 2005.

### Horticulture Volunteers

**388** Champaign County Master Gardeners

**25** Ford-Iroquois Counties Master Gardeners

**92** Vermilion County Master Gardeners

**232** East Central Illinois Master Naturalists





## Ag in the Classroom brings agriculture education to youth

It is hard to deny the shift currently happening in how youth interact with agriculture. While in the past many worked on family farms, now many may have never even been to one. The “Ag in the Classroom” program strives to close that gap by providing all youth experiences with agriculture.

The Ford-Iroquois Ag in the Classroom program is organized and taught through Extension. Ag in the Classroom coordinator Larry Haigh works with schools to teach children from kindergarten through fifth grade all about agriculture. From corn to pumpkins, pigs to chicks, and dairy to beef, youth are exposed to Illinois agriculture at a young age.

Deb Talbert, a first-grade teacher at Iroquois West Elementary, appreciates the valuable information that her class gains from the Ag in the Classroom program. She expressed her gratitude by saying, “Even though we live in an agricultural area, I’m always surprised by how little our students know about agriculture. This is one of the reasons that the Ag in the Classroom program is so important to our school. Larry provides ag experiences to our students through literature, videos, projects, games, and hands-on activities.”

The Ag in the Classroom program serves nearly 700 youth throughout Ford and Iroquois Counties. In the words of Haigh, “Agriculture is something that impacts kids’ lives on a daily basis, from the food they eat to the clothes they wear. Through the Ag in the Classroom program, children receive knowledge that they need to be exposed to, regardless of their family involvement in ag.”

## Local Foods and Small Farms

University of Illinois Extension helps farmers learn efficient business practices and protect our environment, bettering the lives of families and communities. This education leads to the best use of time, money, and human capital while securing jobs in various areas of agriculture.

### 2017 Highlights



**700**

Youth in Ford and Iroquois Counties learned about agriculture through the Ag in the Classroom program.



**250**

Farmers were served through programming offered by the U of I Extension and Purdue Extension BiState Group in topics including crops, water quality, and soil health.



**52**

Weekly agriculture articles were published by Extension Educators in the Champaign-Urbana *News-Gazette*, reaching nearly 25,000 doorsteps.



**12**

Small Farm Webinars were offered throughout the winter, covering topics including soil fertility, pond ecology, managing pastures, beehives, utilizing cover crops, and more.



Each year, over 250 farmers learn how to make the most of their family farms through BiState programs.



Miss the live 2017 Small Farms winter webinars? View them, plus additional ag videos, at [go.illinois.edu/LFSFYoutube](http://go.illinois.edu/LFSFYoutube)





## 4-H and Youth Development

Extension 4-H programs teach youth life skills. The leadership and decision-making skills the youth gain through the programs increase the likelihood they will become civically active. 4-H members are more likely to succeed in school, contribute to communities, and less likely to participate in high-risk behaviors. The result is a greater future for all.

### 2017 Highlights



68

4-H clubs served youth, including 18 special interests clubs in topics such as robotics, livestock, cooking, and rabbit agility.



174

Volunteer hours were completed by 19 Teen Teachers at five sites, teaching children about agriculture and art.



244

4-H club leaders dedicated their free time towards helping youth in our area.



22

Volunteers from the College of ACES led hands-on workshops to youth focusing on majors that lead to careers in ag.

### Youth Involved in 4-H



603 Champaign County

126 Ford County

585 Iroquois County

219 Vermilion County

## 4-H Youth help peers with cancer

This year, the Champaign Mixed Clovers 4-H Club celebrated their annual “Kids Helping Kids” sew-a-thon by making bags, pillowcases, and blankets for pediatric cancer patients in Illinois. 4-H youth from clubs throughout Champaign County came together to help their peers, having fun in the process.

For the 11th year of this project, event coordinator and Champaign Mixed Clovers 4-H Club leader Linda Thiele discovered through a community member’s suggestion “Sadie’s Dream for a Cure,” a charity that delivers bags and pillowcases filled with toys, games, and snacks to childhood cancer patients. Thiele saw collaborating with this organization as a great chance to have kids help kids.

Sadie’s Dream for a Cure delivered pre-cut bags and pillowcases, which the 4-H youth then completed. In addition to helping other youth, 4-H members also improved their sewing skills. Thiele observed that throughout the day, processes improved. “Whether a member pinned pieces, turned handles or sewed a pocket, all gained skills and confidence by actually making something,” Thiele says. “It was great to see 4-H members excited to make another child’s life more enjoyable.”

Of course, working together and gaining new skills and confidence is only part of what makes the day so rewarding—even greater is the feeling of hope the youth get for helping others. “If I’m ever walking around and see the bags,” Gabe Yallaly, vice president for the Champaign Mixed Clovers, says, “I’ll know I helped that other kid. And that makes me happy.”



Sophia Goebel and Jaylah Ireland were two of 50 4-H members who participated in this year’s Sew-A-Thon. With adult volunteers, the youth sewed 20 bags, 25 pillowcases, and 12 blankets for peers with cancer.





Ginger Boas  
County  
Director



Jamie Boas  
4-H Youth  
Development  
Educator



Chelsey Byers  
Gerstenecker  
Family Life  
Educator



Caitlin  
Kownacki  
SNAP-Ed  
Educator



Ryan Pankau  
Horticulture  
Educator



Melissa  
Schumacher  
EFNEP  
Educator



Kathy  
Sweedler  
Consumer Econ.  
Educator

### County Director

Ginger Boas

### Educators

Jamie Boas, 4-H Youth Development  
Chelsey Byers Gerstenecker, Family Life  
Caitlin Kownacki, SNAP-Ed  
Ryan Pankau, Horticulture  
Melissa Schumacher, EFNEP  
Kathy Sweedler, Consumer Economics

### Program Coordinators

Amy Cain, 4-H  
Tabitha Elder, Horticulture  
Larry Haigh, 4-H and Ag in the Classroom  
Jenney Hanrahan, Horticulture  
Trent Hawker, Horticulture and Family and  
Consumer Sciences  
Ya Ning Katherine Mei, Family and Consumer Sciences  
Jennifer Odle, 4-H  
Kristin Puckett, 4-H  
Jenny Spinks, SNAP-Ed

### SNAP-Ed Community Workers

Herbert Chavez  
Delinda Hauan  
Del Jacobs  
Ellen Luhman  
Sheri Walker  
Janet Wright

### EFNEP Community Workers

Tracy Bowden  
Jaime Holland  
Juanita Hunter  
Asraa Ibrahim  
Kathy Miller  
Khadiga Mohamed  
Myrna Morales  
Janisha Tyler  
Cornosha Williams

### Office Support Staff

Randal Barton, Business Manager  
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Amanda Bryant Brown, Vermilion County 4-H  
Jeanne Franklin, Champaign County  
Debra Mason, Ford & Iroquois Counties  
Vicki McDaniel, INEP  
Deborah Mikel, Vermilion County  
Suzi Stadel, Champaign County  
Erin Watson, Champaign County  
Lauren Hadden, Student Worker  
Brooke Haag, Student Worker

## Unit Council and County Board Representatives

Charles Alt*	Jim McGuire*
Nancy Boose	Myla Munro
Claudia Dewitt	Bill Pool
Steve Fourez*	Barb Schumacher
Jackson Gady	Carl Sparenberg
David Hastings	Sandy Spitz
Diana Herriott	Katherine Young
Jason Johnson*	Brad Zwilling
Victoria Krones	*Denotes county board appointments.