2017 Impact Report

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION SERVING GRUNDY, KANKAKEE AND WILL COUNTIES



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Don't worry! The correct logos will be added before everything goes to print.





http://web.extension.illinois.edu/ gkw/

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- **Top Right:** Will County—Boys and Girls Club Cooking School
- Bottom Left: Will County, 4-H Metro—4-H Robotics SPIN Club
- Bottom Right: Grundy County—4-H Camps for Learning



A Note from the Director

It has been busy as usual for Extension providing many research-based programs. Extension translates the research based information from the University of Illinois into educational programs that are clear and useful to improve people's lives and strengthen communities.

Unit educators and program coordinators identify, plan and implement programs that address issues in our communities. Some of "what we do."

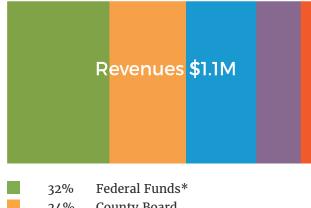
- Ag and Natural Resources: Local Foods and Small Farms provide best practices for specialty crops and livestock; Support Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to teach others to grow; and help with the care of our natural resources
- Nutrition and Wellness: teach classes on managing chronic illness, such as diabetes and heart disease, Food Service Sanitation Mangers Certification, safe home food preservation and consuming more locally grown foods.
- Unit SNAP-Ed: nutrition education for low-income and lowresource audiences; partners with local coalitions, schools and food pantries to help reduce food insecurity, and encourage healthy food choices.
- 4-H and Youth Development: support volunteers and youth in community clubs that provide opportunities for youth to develop life skills that can lead to leadership, careers, and healthy living.
- Metro 4-H: provide an avenue to explore and master STEM in Special Interest (SPIN) clubs and in community partnerships.
- Family and Consumer Science Economics: teach and encourage financial wellness.

We are so grateful for the many volunteers that support the efforts of Extension in their communities with their time, talent and treasure. We appreciate the support of County Boards, United Way of Grundy County, United Way of Will County, 4–H Foundations and Federations of the counties and other donors. The impact of Extension is possible through the combined work of dedicated staff and volunteers.

This report is but a sample of some of the programs that "help put knowledge to work" in Grundy, Kankakee and Will Counties. As always, if you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Beth LaPlante County Extension Director laplante@illinois.edu

Financial Report



24%	County Board
22%	Reserves**
14%	Local Sources***
8%	State

* Federal Funds include Illinois Nutrition Education Program grant monies

**Did not receive FY17 State of Illinois matching funds. Used emergency reserves to cover lost revenue.

***Donations from Foundations, Federations, United Way of Grundy County, United Way of Will County and program fees.

Expenditures \$1.1M

65%	Personnel
22%	Overhead
13%	Programming

Unit Extension Council

Karen Bellot
Cathy Breeck
Donna Cockream
Lucy James
Teri Jecmen
Kris Kinsella
Kelly Knobloch
SheAllah Muhammad

Megan Neuman Jim Price Dianne Ross Randy Seggebruch Theodora Warmack Victoria Wax Jennifer Wick Kimberly Wysocki



Each year, county, township, and municipal elected and appointed officials and administrators from across the state learn through the Local Government Education webinar series. Participants benefit from the advanced instruction and broad expertise that instructors bring to our programming, and from the question-and-answer session following each presentation. In 2017, 14,00 local government officials learned through the live webinars and program recordings on a variety of topics, including State and Federal legislative updates, Infrastructure for Economic Development, Disaster Recovery, Rural Youth Retention Strategies, and the Opioid Crisis in Illinois. For more information, visit **go.illinois.edu/lge**.





Leadership Through Government

For over 35 years, University of Illinois Extension Grundy County has coordinated the annual Government Day with local schools and county officials. Students in the 5th through 8th grades are invited to submit an essay describing the government position they are interested in job shadowing. Each year close to 800 essays are returned. The essays are distributed to the local government officials to be reviewed and to select the students.

This year 92 youth were selected to participate in Government Day. Most of the youth spent the morning at the County Building. They were presented with a proposal to allow a stone quarry in the county. The youth met in committees with County Board members and officials. They had to consider the advantages (revenue, local source of road materials, and jobs) against the disadvantages (pollution, noise, and increased truck traffic). They then held a mock County Board Meeting to determine the outcome. Another group of students met at the Courthouse with the Judges, States Attorneys, Public Defender and Probation Officers and participated in a Mock trial. All youth toured the County Jail.

The culmination of the event was a luncheon for the youth and officials. Survey results indicated that most realized that discussions and actions made by our local officials have an impact on the future of our county.

Camps for Learning

Camps for Learning involved about 200 youth in Morris and Coal City. The Morris Public Library, Saratoga School, and the YMCA hosted these camps. The 12 sessions had different themes each week, but all of the camps were "hands on" involvement by the attendees. Extension focused on gardening, team building, insects, wind power, DNA, genetics, mystery solving, nature, fitness, and understanding differences.

For the gardening unit, the campers prepared raised garden beds by adding soil and fertilizer. They planted herbs and vegetables that they were able to harvest 7 weeks later. Sixty of the campers spent a day at the local 4–H fair interacting with 4–H youth. Many of the campers had never had the opportunity to be near large animals like horses, cattle and pigs.

Staff and older 4-H members taught the camps. These teen teachers are evidence of the leadership qualities developed by the youth as they progress through the 4-H program.



Kankakee County 4-H

Dog Training

Pat Farman has volunteered with the 4-H dog training program in Kankakee County for 40 years. With her assistants, Myra Emme and Vanessa Salm, 4-H youth learn the skills of caring for their animals, yet it extends beyond that. They learn daily lessons of responsibility by feeding and grooming their family dog and develop a bond. They learn that dedication, positive reinforcement, and frequent practice is key to teaching their animals and becoming successful leaders for their dog. The dedication, caring, and responsibility they learn in the 4-H dog program carries over to successful careers.

4-H places youth in meaningful leadership roles today and surrounds them with caring, supportive adults who prepare their members for success. Outstanding examples include Kaylee, a successful veterinary hospital manager. Vanessa opened her own thriving dog grooming shop and teaches obedience classes. Danielle is working as a veterinary technician as she applied to vet school. Melanie currently teaches dog obedience and is a responsible dog breeder. Christine became a dedicated classroom teacher. Hayden is working as a swine farm technician with a manager-in-training program. He still puts aside time to train and hunt with his dogs. Rachel and her dog excelled at obedience, Frisbee and agility. Rachel has also given several training demonstrations. Keith is a caring nurse. These 4-H members learned skills that transitioned into their daily lives and prepared them to pursue related careers or to take those learned skills and apply them to other fields. Pat Farman helps to nurture the caring spirit for many in Kankakee County 4-H.



L to R: Pat Farman, Myra Emme, & Vanessa Salm



Livestock Judging Contest

At the 2017 Kankakee County Fair, the first Livestock Judging Contest took place. Competing in livestock judging contests is a great way for youth to learn both the show side of the livestock industry, as well as the practicality of the commercial side. There were sixty-three 4-H participants. The 4-Her's judged two classes of beef cattle, two classes of sheep, two classes of swine, and one class of market goats. At the conclusion of each class, 4-H participants learned the official placing along with an explanation. 4-Her's had a better understanding of what judges might say about their animals on show day. It helped them to evaluate livestock at home in their own operation, selecting a show animal to purchase, picking a few head out of their home-raised livestock to show, or making breeding decisions.

Andy Frerichs, volunteer coordinator, stated there is a tremendous amount of support that comes from the participants, fellow 4-Her's, parents, and leaders. Thanks to everyone who helped calculate scores, manage the livestock, and gather prizes for our contestants.





The Show Goes On



The Will County 4-H Shows have long been a staple of the 4-H experience. In Will County, 185 youth exhibited 580 projects. Shows are the opportunity to display the mastery that they have achieved in the project area.

We have over 200 project areas for youth to experience. They range from Aerospace to Woodworking. Some involve taking care of animals while others may involve studying a subject and presenting a poster. The 4-H Shows are an opportunity to master a subject area and then demonstrate their communication skills as they explain their project to the judge.

The ultimate goal for most of the 4-H'ers is to learn a new skill and qualify to exhibit at the State Fair. Last year 72 youth from Will County exhibited at the State Fair.



Leaders in the Making

4-H knows that youth are an important resource in our communities. The Will County 4-H Club program has been producing outstanding young leaders since it started. Many of these young leaders grow into adult leaders in their communities. They become school board members, elected officials, and business leaders. For many youth, with caring adult volunteers offering guidance, the leadership experience starts at the 4-H club level. The youth become involved in committees and officer positions. They learn how to set agendas, discuss items, and vote on proposals.

Further opportunities for leadership occurs at the county level where older 4-Her's may belong to Federation or 4-H Ambassadors. Twelve Will County 4-H members attended statewide leadership events in 2017.

In addition to these events, Will County 4-H had 2 members selected for the State Youth Leadership Team, and 2 members took part in National 4-H Leadership Conferences. The leadership development of Will County 4-H members are some of the gems of the program.





Embryology: Hands-on STEM in the Classroom

What can an egg teach a student? In 2017, thousands of students throughout Will County, learned the answer is... plenty! From first graders to seniors in high school, youth had that unique opportunity to learn all about eggs, biology, life cycles, embryonic development and food systems when they participated in the classic University of Illinois Extension Incubation & Embryology Project. Extension's mission is to bring our research-based information from our Urbana campus to local counties; and the embryology program does just that.

The University of Illinois Extension Poultry Specialist came to Will County to train the participating teachers and provided support throughout the program in tandem with local staff. Teachers embrace this program as it provides hands-on STEM learning opportunities for a month in the classroom where students learn skills that translate to all areas of science.

Incubation & Embryology is a highly adaptable program that provides opportunity for all grade

levels and easily transitions into many curriculum areas. The embryology program also gives teachers the opportunity to address the importance agriculture plays in the daily lives of everyone from farm to table whether it be urban, suburban or rural.

"My students absolutely love the embryology unit each spring. In August my new students always ask, "When are we hatching the chicks?" I even have students years later see me and ask, "Do you still hatch the chicks?" It is a wonderful handson experience for my students to learn about the [chicken] life cycle, that leaves a lifelong impression. I'm thankful this is available for teachers." AMY DEUTSCHE, WILL COUNTY TEACHER



Will County 4-H Metro

4-H Robotics SPIN Clubs

4-H Robotics SPIN Clubs continue to be a hit with youth in Unit 9! In 2017, seven new robotics clubs were formed and over 400 youth, grades 4-8, participated in the program. The growth of the program created the need to hold two local robotics competitions to accommodate all participants.

Youth meet and learn how to build and program a LEGO Mindstorm robot. The curriculum focuses on teaching the youth to program a robot, work as a team, and how to think like an engineer. The club program culminates with the 4-H Robotics Competition.

To measure the success of the program, each year the youth complete a Youth Engagement Survey created by National 4-H Council. Scores show that youth in these clubs:

- Have positive attitudes toward science
- Believe they can complete an experiment successfully
- Have positive attitudes toward working as a team
- Feel they belong in the 4-H SPIN Club
- Feel their leader cares about them and their success





Youth Reached in Partner Programs

20 Sites



33

27 Robotic SPIN Clubs

Leaders

Robotics Club



Boys and Girls Club Cooking School

During the summer of 2017, University of Illinois Extension staff partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Joliet to offer 4–H cooking schools for youth participants. The cooking schools were offered each week and a total of 40 youth participated, many returning every week.

During the cooking schools, youth learned to prepare healthy dishes that they could recreate at home, such as magical fruit salad, veggie pitas, and taco dip. Many of the youth tried foods that they had never tried before. One participant was inspired to share one of her favorite recipes from home and brought in the ingredients to create it with the group!

Skills youth learned included knife skills, how to measure wet and dry ingredients, different mixing techniques and how to recreate recipes at home by substituting ingredients their families have available or their favorite fruits and vegetables.

"Thank you for teaching us to make this food, I can't wait to make it when I get home!"



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, systems, and environmental changes, SNAP-Education positively impacts the nutrition and activity choices of people and communities we serve.

Serving Local Residents



Food Access

United States Department of Agriculture estimated that 42 million people in the United States were food insecure in 2015, which means approximately one in every eight live in households without consistent access to adequate food. Now more than ever, families are relying on food pantries to fill the food gap.

Our University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed Unit Educator has collaborated with several local food pantries, Northern Illinois Food Bank, Will County Health Department, and Head Start programs to address the issue of food security. One initiative has been with Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet Head Start program. A food insecurity screening questionnaire that quickly assesses families in the Head Start program for risk of food insecurity was implemented. The tool has been used during every intake assessment of every family enrolled in Head Start since January 2017. The Educator also developed a resource guide of local organizations in Will County that provide emergency food, employment and education resources for the families.

The Head Start Nutrition Services Manager has reported that the questionnaire tool has been extremely helpful in identifying families who are food insecure or are at risk of becoming food insecure. As a result of the collaboration, the Head Start program has been able to intervene and help connect these families to the resources they need.

"The Food Insecurity Screener has been very helpful in identifying families that are food insecure and that are at risk of becoming food insecure. The Family Advocates have been using the tool with families and providing the local resources list as a follow up to assist families." DEBORAH FEARS, HEAD START

Nutrition and Wellness





Cooking School: Extension Partners with Grundy County Health Department

In today's fast-paced society, helping families find healthy eating styles that works for them is no easy task. This is the challenge initiated by United States Department of Agriculture. In addition, families need to increase knowledge and skills related to meal planning and cooking food at home. Grundy County Healthy Families Project did just that. Led by Kelly Hitt, Grundy County Health Department Outreach and Education Coordinator, a six-month partnership with Extension Nutrition and Wellness was developed and a series of family cooking schools evolved.

Funded through a grant from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the project ran from February to July 2017. GCHD recruited local families and negotiated agreements with area churches for use of their kitchens. Extension developed cooking school lessons and family friendly recipes. Family teams consisted of one adult and one youth between 12 and 18 years of age. Two three-hour hands-on cooking classes were held each month.

For the past two decades, schools have been offering fewer and fewer life skill classes such as meal planning and cooking. Studies support the direct positive correlation between frequency of family meals and nutritional health of youth. Youth who share a family meal 3+ times/week are more likely to be in normal weight range and have healthier eating patterns than those who share fewer. This project was designed so that adults and youth had an opportunity to work together and learn from each other. When families learn to prepare nutritious foods using healthy cooking techniques, youth are more likely to begin healthy eating patterns that last a lifetime.

Goal: to bring family members together in the kitchen to share in food preparation activities that will have lasting positive effects on youth and adults.

Learning objectives included: healthy food selection, handwashing and kitchen clean-up, cutting board and knife skills, kitchen safety, delicious food preparation and tasting.

Research shows that cooking together is valuable for families. Involving youth in family meals helps to cultivate togetherness, social skills at the dinner table, and pride in producing healthy nutritious meals.



Nutrition and Wellness Educator served as the cooking school instructor and primary lead of education (supported by 3 or more volunteers) at each monthly cooking school lesson.



"I think the Healthy Families' Cooking classes were a huge success. It was awesome to see kids and teens come out of their shell and enjoy cooking. In our county we saw a lack of activities offered that encouraged kids and their family to participate together. We wanted to change that. These classes achieved that and more thanks to the University of Illinois Extension partnership!" KELLY HITT, PROJECT LEADER, GRUNDY COUNTY COOKING SCHOOL

Community Education

Tasty Tuesdays is much more than the name implies. It is a 2 ¹/₂ – hour lesson with cooking demonstrations, social interaction, and tasting using locally sourced foods. Goal: Participants are encouraged to buy locally grown produce from Farmers Markets, roadside stands, and direct sales from farmers in support of our local economy during the growing season. Food safety and storage, cooking skills, easy, quick food dishes are demonstrated and tasted. Impact: 90% of participants increased fruit and vegetable consumption and are preparing more meals at home. 192 participants attended 8 classes in 2017.



Food Safety and Food Sanitation

Outbreaks of foodborne illness continues to plague the food supply throughout Illinois and the nation. Seventy-five participants received training as safe food handlers. Thirty-four participants from Will and Kankakee counties completed the five-year certification as Food Service Sanitation Managers. Participation included Extension staff, 4–H volunteers, and community leaders including volunteers and staff from Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Kankakee Community College Lifelong Learning Institute: Collaboration with KCC Spring and Fall Semesters; 54 participants attended six (6) lessons – 56% increase in Fall enrollment



Consumer Economics

Money Smart Week[®] is a public awareness campaign designed to help consumers better manage their personal finances. This year during Money Smart Week, the Consumer Economics Educator held seven programs with nearly 100 attendees from across Will and Kankakee Counties.

Topics Presented: Getting Ready for Estate Planning; Financial Tips for Retirees in Today's Economy; Get Savvy – Grow Your Green Stuff; Identity Theft; Financial File Cabinet Too Full?; and Spending Plans.

Extension collaborated with a retired teacher's group, the Money Management Center at University of Illinois system, and these local libraries:

- Palos Heights Public Library
- Steger-South Public Library
- Homer Township Public Library
- Peotone Public Library
- Manhattan-Elwood Public Library

2017 Northern Illinois Pumpkin Field Day



Squash vine borer

Approximately half of the pumpkins produced in the US are grown in Illinois, where the top-ranked producing counties include Kankakee and Will counties. The pumpkins are primarily grown for processing, with a small quantity going to ornamental sales. Their orange color is an indicator of the presence of an antioxidant betacarotene, a precursor to Vitamin A. Consuming pumpkins and their beta carotene offers many important functions needed in overall health.

In order to update growers on new technical pumpkin production information, Extension organized a Pumpkin Field Day at the Dollinger Pumpkin Farm in Channahon. Three companies donated seed of several different pumpkin varieties to be planted for the event. Twenty total varieties were planted; each had one or more unique properties such as size, color, texture, shape and eating quality.

Extension educators provided information on the latest herbicides for use in pumpkin production and strategies to use to reduce weed resistance to herbicides; management of important fungal and bacterial diseases in pumpkins; and recommendations for insect pest management. Squash vine borer is a major pumpkin pest. A new fungicide/insecticide mixture (Farmore F1400) is effectively protecting vegetables against this pest.

"Well organized with knowledgeable presenters. Now getting help with the disease that kills my big pumpkins. It was so nice to have the opportunity to speak with other growers about their operations. Best field day I have ever been to." FIELD DAY PARTICIPANT



Basics of Fruit Tree Production

Illinois is traditionally a field crops state but the push to produce more of its own food has stimulated gardeners and farmers to grow more specialty crops, which include fruit trees. This class attracted backyard and commercial fruit growers alike. Topics presented included: planting site selection and preparation; choice of tree (what kind; varieties; dwarf, semi-dwarf or standard size); training trees for best shape; pruning to improve tree quality; protection against diseases and insect pests; and harvest and storage of fruits.

After class, participants said they learned the following:

- different size trees based on rootstock type
- managing blossom number for better quality fruit
- different pests and diseases and their management

Participants indicated that as a result of this class, they would do the following:

- prune and train trees for better growth
- prepare planting site properly (proper size of hole, apply compost, etc.)
- reduce fruit for better quality fruit
- soil testing; apply fertilizer to trees periodically (include micronutrients)
- diagnose diseases and insect pests and treat (also use resistant varieties)



Pruning a fruit tree



2017 Small Farms WINTER WEBINAR SERIES

Local Food Systems/Small Farms 2017 Winter Webinars Series

During the last five years, the University of Illinois Extension's Local Food Systems/Small Farms (LFSSF) educator team has successfully delivered agricultural programs to clients in weekly presentations during first three months of the year. These online presentations gave small farm producers a look at how leading practices in production, management, and marketing can improve profitability and sustainability.

This educational effort had a remarkable number of participants, mainly due to

- provision of research-based and applicable information
- convenience of listening to online presentation at home or elsewhere
- webinar offering during an off-season period (winter)
- farmer preparation for the upcoming season

During the 2017 Winter Webinar series, nearly 1200 sites registered for the entire series of eleven presentations. Most participants were from Illinois. Topics presented included: strawberry production; hay quality; cut flower production; microgreen production; fruit tree pruning; farm food safety; farming as a business; honey bee mite infestation; windbreaks on a farm; mulching vegetables; and soil management in high tunnels.

In post-webinar feedback, participants indicated:

- knowledge before and after presentation, on a scale of 1-5, average: 2.61, and 4.43, respectively
- likelihood of application of learned information/ skill: on a scale of 1 (will not) and 5 (definitely will), average response was 3.9 (range was 3.49 to 4.31)

Plant a Tomato and Grow a Butterfly

How do you plant a vegetable and end up growing our smallest migratory animal? Through partnership and flexible programming. That's Extension. When the Channahon Park District contacted Will County Master Gardeners in April to teach staff and youth about starting a small vegetable garden for summer camp participants, no one knew that out of that small project, an entire junior high school would be rearing migratory butterflies in their classrooms by the start of the new school year.

The partnership between Will County Extension, Channahon Park District and Three Rivers Junior High School brought together a unique opportunity to not only teach students seed starting, gardening, harvesting fresh healthy vegetables, and also how to use them in recipes.

While teaching seed starting at the school, the Master Gardeners noticed a small area at the front of the school that would make an excellent wildlife habitat. The school administration and teachers embraced the new project wholeheartedly and when the students returned from summer break, they were taught how to raise caterpillars in their own classroom.

The program is entering its second year with plans for significant expansion on both fronts. At the park district, plans for adding additional gardens for



youth and adding an accessible raised bed garden for seniors. At the school, the Master Gardeners are helping to develop a "caterpillar nursery" garden on the school property to make the program sustainable for years to come.

Will County Participation



"The monarch butterfly garden was a highlight for us at the start of our school year. Master Gardeners spent the entire summer planting and tending the garden so that when students arrived in August they would find butterflies in the garden. We had an absolutely wonderful experience. Once school was in session, your Master Gardeners scheduled outdoor lessons for every classroom out by the garden. This is where students learned about the life cycle of the Monarch and were given instructions on how to care for their caterpillar. Your gardeners continued to follow up and provided additional guidance and support throughout the entire process. We are looking forward to working with them again on another garden. " SUE KAVISH, PRINCIPAL, THREE RIVERS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Straw Bale Gardening

How can we get a school and community garden without digging up the entire lot across from the school? This was the first question from the Bourbonnais Elementary School District Principal. Let's talk about Straw Bale Gardening, replied Kankakee County's Master Gardener Coordinator. After discussions into the pros and cons of this type of gardening, it was decided that the school district would implement the project.

Sixty people attended straw bale gardening classes presented by Extension and hosted by Bourbonnais Public Library. These classes included how to prepare the bales with fertilizer and water; the differences between types of plants in bales versus planting directly in the soil. The bales were purchased by school families and others living in the nearby community who wanted to join this new community garden. One hundred twenty-nine straw bales were delivered early May – just in time for the necessary 10 days of conditioning the bales before the community planting day.

Two hundred people ascended on the school property to plant their bales on May 14, 2017. Plants were donated by the Bourbonnais Elementary School District. High school students volunteered to be plant helpers. The weather was perfect for a day in the garden. As the summer continued, straw bales began to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers that were enjoyed by their gardener. Many residents from the community visited the straw bale garden to see the progress. The Bourbonnais Public Library, adjacent to the garden, has seen an increase in books checked out on gardening topics.



Kankakee County Participation





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Grundy County

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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 in any program, please contact the county Extension Office. The Illinois Nutrition Education Program is funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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