



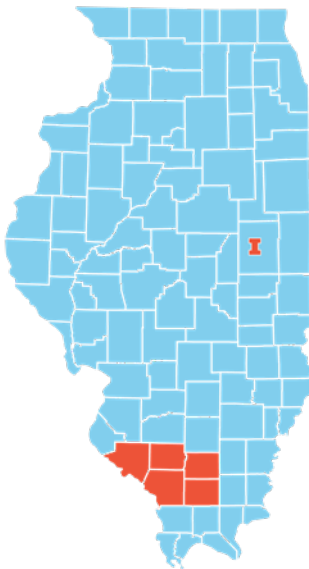
EXTENSION
IN ACTION 

Serving Franklin, Jackson, Perry,
Randolph, and Williamson Counties



Lynn Heins
County Director

Welcome to University of Illinois Extension in Franklin, Jackson, Perry, Randolph, and Williamson County!



It is my pleasure to lead a team of dedicated staff and volunteers who provide reliable, research-based programs to diverse residents and businesses within our communities. Illinois Extension remains a trusted source to address the most pressing issues in Illinois related to food, health, environment, community, and economy.

Rising food costs continue to be a serious issue for many families and businesses. We all deserve access to healthy, affordable food. Illinois Extension helps people grow and source local food, then teaches them how to prepare healthy meals for their families. Below are just a few local initiatives that Illinois Extension implemented in 2022 to address the issue of food security:

- Facilitated a food preservation workshop for 4-H youth
- Provided direct nutrition education in schools
- Provided technical support for food donation gardens

- Partnered with local agencies to host the Food Security Summit
- Implemented policy, systems, and environmental changes in step with community partners

The work outlined in this impact report was made possible through community partnerships and strong local support from county boards, 4-H and Extension foundations, home and community education associations, county farm bureaus, and individual and business contributions. Additional important revenue sources are provided through federal, state, and other grant funds. We are pleased to share this brief impact report highlighting Extension’s work within Franklin, Jackson, Perry, Randolph, and Williamson counties. Thank you for your continued support!

Lynn Heins
County Director



Illinois Extension Makes an Impact

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's land grant mission thrives each day through Extension's programs, resources, knowledge, and dedicated staff that are responsive to five grand challenge themes:



Community:
Support Strong and Resilient Residents



Economy:
Grow a Prosperous Economy



Environment:
Sustain Natural Resources at Home and in Public Spaces



Food:
Maintain a Safe and Accessible Food Supply



Health:
Maximize Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health

2022 Engagement

Extension leaders, staff, and stakeholders define priorities that create meaningful, mission-centered outcomes throughout the state:

643 Communities Served	720K+ Program Attendees	14.5M+ Webpage Views	22.9M+ Social Media Impressions	900K+ YouTube Views
488 Educational Sessions/Week (25K+ Annually)	95 Online Courses Accessed by 12K+ People	7,062 Local Government Education Webinar Reach	1,807 4-H Clubs	178,341 4-H Affiliations

Partnerships

Resource Generation

5,941 Program Volunteers	269 Community Gardens	1,030 School Partners	\$15,732,391 Value of Volunteer Contributions	\$223,639 Value of Donated Garden Produce
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Staff, volunteers, and youth plant 100 trees at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds on Earth Day.



Illinois Extension plants trees throughout Southern Illinois

From creating habitats for local species to reducing stormwater runoff and erosion, trees offer many environmental benefits. To enhance the region's natural resources, Illinois Extension and 4-H recently added new trees to local parks and landscapes. Through 4-H Green Communities, youth planted oak savannas to augment oak-hickory forest habitats currently under threat from mesophication.

Extension also partnered with several soil & water conservations districts to create an arboretum at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds. Established in 2021, the Tree Legacy Project expands the arboretum yearly. With 2022 marking the 100-year anniversary of the DuQuoin State Fair, the project had a big boost through a donation from the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Extension staff, volunteers, and local youth spent Earth Day planting 100 trees to commemorate the occasion. A local Master Gardener gave guidance as Illinois Director of Agriculture Jerry Costello and First Lady MK Pritzker planted the first tree. The expanded arboretum will be an enjoyment for many generations to come.



Illinois Director of Agriculture Jerry Costello helps plant trees alongside staff and volunteers.

Conservation fair inspires a love of the environment in local youth



The survival of our planet depends on our water, land, and air quality. These shared resources must be managed through sustainable practices that support ecological balance. Programs and learning activities designed for kids can inspire a love of the environment, stewardship, and spark an interest in the world around them.

In the fall, students from schools across the region attended the Conservation Fair at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds. After a three-year pause for this in-person event due to COVID-19, buses filled with kids from many local schools were a welcomed sight for educators, staff, volunteers, and presenters. The two-day fair was filled with hands-on activities about wildlife, pollinators, composting, and science. With 2,478 students in attendance, the event was an excellent opportunity to showcase everything Extension has to offer. Introducing students to environmental programs at an early age creates building blocks for youth to step into the role of advocates for future conservation efforts.



Local foods and small farms educator Katie Bell lets kids examine earthworms as they learn about composting.



Volunteers distribute healthy food at mobile food markets.



Illinois Extension assists with local food access

A strong sense of community unites people to develop shared goals, support one another, and work together for the common good.

Six years ago, Franklin County 4-H Hunger Ambassadors saw a need in the community; their neighbors needed food. Through a partnership with the St. Louis Area Foodbank, a mobile food market was established to help those struggling with food insecurity. Each month, dedicated volunteers and community partners distribute fresh food to those in need.

In 2022, over 1,902 households were served. Illinois Extension has worked with St. Louis Area Foodbank to establish four additional mobile markets and pop-up food distribution events. Mobile markets and other food access sites are listed on the Find Food IL Community Food Map, where individuals can search zip codes for food resources in their area.



Check out the map
go.illinois.edu/FindFood



Local staff share healthy recipes with food pantries

Personal health decisions are influenced by the broader community and the world around us. By working together, we can create environments where healthy choices are the easy choices. Classrooms, cafeterias, food pantries, and other environments can promote health and well-being. Knowing what to cook each night can be stressful, especially when you are on a limited budget. Last year, Illinois Extension staff met at community kitchens to record recipe demonstration videos. The recipes were selected from the Eat.Move.Save. collection, which includes healthy options made from affordable ingredients. The demonstrations were put on a playlist and shared with local food pantries to display on televisions. Participants could also pick up postcards and scan a QR code that led them to the video series.



Check out the recipe videos
go.illinois.edu/healthyrecipesforyou

Kids in the Park connects youth with nature

Summer days should not be spent cooped up inside, but sometimes it's hard to get kids outdoors. 4-H is filled with many activities that connect kids with nature. Kids in the Park is a local program that gets kids outside with fun activities, field trips, and learning opportunities. Local Master Gardeners helped lead this six-part series in early June. Project areas included creating herbariums, tree identification, and more. The program also included two field trips for youth to kayak, hike, and explore nature at a local state park. The annual program dives deeper into a specific nature theme. This past year, youth learned more about birds. Volunteers shared information about their habitats, nesting, breeds of birds, and how to photograph birds. The program is a great way to kickstart the summer and prepare kids for more outdoor adventures all season long.



A 4-H member enjoys kayaking at Pyramid State Park during the Kids in the Park summer program.

Craniums and geraniums highlight the health benefits of gardening

There's something therapeutic about getting your hands in the soil. All ages and skill levels can enjoy gardening, but it is especially beneficial for seniors. The Craniums & Geraniums program showcased how gardening is not only fun; it promotes brain health, too. Benefits include opportunities to socialize, increase physical activity, build confidence, and enhance mood. The collaborative event allowed participants to learn more about health, well-being, and gardening knowledge as they planted container gardens to take home and enjoy. Seniors also learned how gardening could positively impact thinking, memory, reasoning skills, and the ability to focus. The program covered the basics of container gardening, safety tips, and information on adaptive gardening, which can assist those with limited mobility to continue gardening.



4,467
Program attendance



63
Educational sessions



48
Trained Master Gardener & Master Naturalist volunteers



\$110,818
Master Gardener & Master Naturalist volunteer value



Go, Slow, and Whoa messaging helps guide food pantry clients to healthy food choices.



Guided messaging make healthy choices the easy choices

Thanks to guidance from Illinois Extension, Victory Dream Food Pantry recently implemented “Go, Slow, Whoa” healthy messaging. The system follows the same colors as a traffic light, with healthy products like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables marked with a green light to represent “go” foods. A yellow light indicates “slow,” meaning clients should pause as these items may support good health, but could also have added sugars and fats. “Whoa” foods are marked with a red light as a warning that those food items do not support good health and should only be consumed occasionally.

Victory Dream has a client-choice food pantry where fresh fruits, vegetables, and foods are available to clients on stacked pallets, tables, or in cold storage units. The colorful red, yellow, and green signage is placed alongside various food items to indicate which options would provide the greatest health benefits. The start of the line has green signs indicating healthy foods, followed by yellow signs and ending with red signs. The messaging helps clients better understand food nutrition options available throughout the site on distribution days.



Community partners address food insecurity at Summit

According to Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap, over 45,000 southern Illinoisans do not have enough food to eat. That’s nearly 15% of local residents. At the Southern Illinois Food Security Summit, community partners came together to collaborate, learn, and prioritize healthy food access initiatives. Stephen Ericson, executive director for Feeding Illinois, shared

efforts to increase healthy, fresh, local produce in food banks and pantries through the Farmer to Food Bank initiative. The summit also included highlights on food insecurity screening and referrals, SNAP-EBT and Link Match programs at farmers markets, and taking a trauma-informed approach to addressing food security.

Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton sent a pre-recorded message commending the group on feeding, growing, and supporting Illinois. Stratton noted that equitable food access is key to healthy, whole, and happy communities as she discussed the agricultural equity and food insecurity initiative, Ag Connects Us All. Addressing food insecurity is a team effort. When numerous organizations and agencies work together with one goal, they can help close the gap for those struggling with food access in our region.

Nourishing communities is more than just getting food to the table. It’s about recognizing that everyone deserves access to fresh, nutrient-dense food that is culturally relevant.
Lt. Gov. Stratton



Community partners gather at second annual Food Security Summit.



18
Partnerships with K-12 Schools



14
Partnerships with Early Childhood Centers



49
Partnerships with Emergency Food Sites and Other types of Organizations



71
Policy, system and/or environmental changes adopted by SNAP-Ed partner organizations



749
Nutrition education classes



12,864
Total Estimated SNAP-Ed Reach



Program shares keys to aging with local seniors

What you do today will affect your future. Nowhere is this more true than aging. How you care for yourself through the years, physically and mentally, will impact the natural aging process. Extension connected with local seniors throughout the year to share *Keys to Embracing Aging*. The curriculum was designed by University of Kentucky and University of Arkansas Extension and is facilitated by local educators. The group met monthly, exploring different topics, such as brain activity, stress management, quality sleep, social activity, eating smart, tuning in to the times, and developing a positive attitude. The program showcases how growing older brings new experiences, knowledge, and wisdom. We are all aging, but when implementing these keys, the experience can be positive, joyful, and exciting.



Poverty simulation creates compassionate communities

A major illness or sudden loss of employment can be catastrophic, and those who are ill-prepared could fall into poverty. Financial instability can negatively affect physical, mental, and social health. Illinois Extension helped facilitate a poverty simulation at Stronger Together 2022, a conference focused on healing and wellness. During the immersive experience, participants did their best to survive week-to-week simulating real-life scenarios and obstacles while they “lived” one month in poverty. The simulation highlights the day-to-day challenges faced by those living in poverty and how current systems, policies, and practices may create barriers. Viewing poverty through this lens helps raise awareness, increase understanding, transform perspectives, and inspire local change.



The poverty simulation shed light on the struggles faced by those with low income.

Extension builds healthy communities during partnership program

Over half of Illinois adults have a known chronic health condition, with many facing inequities that make improving their health more challenging. People of all ages need trusted and reliable research-based information to make health decisions that improve their quality of life. With community partners, Extension delivers creative, sustainable solutions to ensure these supports are available when and where people need them. Last year, Extension was part of a local food and nutrition access team focused on identifying resources and educational efforts around food and nutrition. The team increased food access for Spanish-language families by increasing public transportation for Hispanic families, allowing them to travel to food pantries or grocery stores at no cost.



Book walk encourages reading and activity

When exercise is fun, kids are more likely to stay active. Colorful signs lined walking trails in local parks as Extension and community libraries invited children and their families to participate in a book walk. Beginning in May and hosted all summer, the pop-up book walks encourage families to be physically active while building a passion for reading. The outdoor, interactive experience involved a deconstructed version of *Giraffes Can't Dance*, a book about a giraffe who learns to move to his own rhythm, written by Giles Andreae and illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees. Each stop on the walk included a page from the beloved children's book and a fun activity to get the whole family moving. The walk also showcased activities and resources from several Eat.Move.Save. curricula designed to help families build a healthy lifestyle.



A community member reads a portion of *Giraffes Can't Dance* to her son during a book walk.



Farming communities connect with campus experts at Ewing Demonstration Center

Ewing Demonstration Center has served the local community since 1910. From the beginning, it was a place where area farmers and agricultural professionals worked with University researchers to develop and implement research that would benefit the local farming community. The center has featured no-till research and demonstration plots for over 50 years, offering representative growing conditions for southern Illinois. The center continues the tradition of annual events, including Ewing Agronomy Field Day. Educators and campus faculty visit the research grounds to answer questions and provide best management practices for local growers. Students from area high schools and community colleges attend the Agricultural Careers and Technology Field Day each fall where industry leaders answer talk to students about what they look for in potential employees. Students interested in pursuing higher education can speak directly to recruiters and collect resources from community colleges or universities that offer ag programs.



People movers transport participants around the grounds at Ewing Field Day.



Learn more
go.illinois.edu/ewingdemonstrationcenter

Annie's Project empowers women in agriculture



Women may be an underrepresented group in agriculture, but thanks to a local course, participants receive support and guidance. Annie's Project is a national program with roots in Illinois. Co-created by a former Extension county director, the program empowers women through education, networks, and resources. Participants come together to learn from experts in production, financial management, human resources, marketing, and the legal field. Annie's Project covers many topics dedicated to strengthening women's roles in modern farm and ranch enterprises, including business plans, crop insurance, diversifying farm operations, estate planning, and farm appraisal. The six-week series is an excellent opportunity for women at all levels of agriculture. Those just starting out and seasoned farmers come together to learn, network, and receive support from one another. The program helps women in agriculture become change agents who will strengthen their businesses, families, and communities.



Annie's Project helps strengthen women's roles in modern farm and ranch enterprises.



Participants visit Glacier's End Farm during a summer twilight meeting.



Twilight meetings continue to highlight local farming enterprises

Whether large commercial agriculture operations, small farms, or community and backyard gardens, our food supply's future relies on practices that boost production and capacity. Growers at all levels benefit from effective, efficient, and sustainable approaches to cultivating produce, crops, and livestock that feed their families, communities, and the world. During summer evenings, you will find Extension hosting events highlighting diverse farming enterprises across southern Illinois. Over the past eight years, the team has partnered with area farms to provide twilight meetings to showcase different production and marketing practices used by local producers. Recent programs included hydroponic vegetable production, high tunnels, field vegetable production, value-added products from orchards, and pasture-raised livestock. By meeting on working farms, area growers have hands-on learning experiences and the chance to network with other growers, an essential step in forming relationships with other local enterprises. This opportunity helps to increase business for both parties, grow the capacity of our local foods and small farms, and support a stronger, more sustainable regional economy.



8,262
program attendance



115
educational sessions



47
online or asynchronous learning sessions



23
expert consultations related to food

Donation gardens feed the community

Food insecurity affects every community within our state. Illinois Extension connects youth, volunteers, and partners as they work together to address the food access needs of communities through research, community service, and advocacy. Established in 2021, the Cultivating Care Donation Garden in Marion is one example of how Extension works with area partners to reduce hunger and provide residents with access to fresh, healthy produce. The project encompassed all areas of Extension with the agriculture and natural resources team leading the way to plant and sustain the vegetable garden, area Master Gardeners and 4-H members volunteering with garden maintenance and upkeep, and SNAP-Ed staff collecting and delivering harvested produce to the Salvation Army food pantry. This past year, cool-season crops were added to expand the garden in the fall. Local volunteers also helped to build a compost bin that will be used to create nutrient-rich soil for the garden. A total of 697 pounds of produce valued at \$1,157 was collected from unit-wide community gardens in 2022. This multi-disciplined approach addressed a core mission of Extension by growing and sharing locally produced food with those in need.



The cultivating care donation garden provides produce to local food pantries.



See more at
go.illinois.edu/cultivatingcaredonationgarden



Mental health program lets teens know their thoughts matter

Even before the pandemic's new social, economic, and life challenges, mental health was a growing concern. Illinois residents of all ages and walks of life need to know where to turn for resources to help manage the daily stressors that impact mental health and well-being. Through the 'Your Thoughts Matter' curriculum, youth get more insight into mental health, its importance to overall well-being, and steps that promote understanding and action. Williamson County 4-H partnered with the Marion Police Department and canine "Pawficer Gary" for several fall sessions. The four-legged companion made it easier for some participants to open up and discuss mental health. The program helped youth learn more about mental health disorders, how to identify strategies for self-help, and ways to help others.



4-H youth explore the world through cultural events

We're all part of a great big world, and intercultural programs help 4-H youth explore new cultures and countries. In the fall, Jackson County 4-H hosted monthly heritage workshops. The programs allowed youth to explore the beliefs, cultural norms, and views of different backgrounds. The annual passport party promoted cultural enrichment in Perry County as 4-H members learned more about a different country or state. 4-H clubs work together to research the assigned region and put together an informative display. Community members are invited to view the 4-H table displays while they share cultural facts during the open-house-style event. The program has been a staple of the community for over two decades and is a great way to inspire youth to continue their journey of cultural awareness.



Local youth build a gondola and a tabletop display to showcase the country of Italy.

Teens learn disaster preparedness at summer program

Every teen should learn two important life-saving skills: understanding how to identify a threat and how to prepare for it should it become real. Extension helped 4-H teens reach this goal at its disaster preparedness training course. My Preparedness Initiative is an award-winning youth preparedness and educational outreach program for teens. The innovative, hands-on program fosters emergency preparedness, civic responsibility, and leadership in teens. Participants learned about disaster preparedness, fire safety and suppression, treatment of injuries, search and rescue, and disaster psychology. The valuable training lets students know they are not helpless when an emergency happens, and they have the tools to assist their families and communities.

4-H STEAM activities spark a love of science and more

Through 4-H STEAM programs, youth learn about science, technology, engineering, art, and math through hands-on projects.

- Students from Sesser-Valier School created marshmallow catapults for a junk drawer robotics project.
- Through Mars Base Camp, Murphysboro Grade School students used engineering skills to build a vehicle that could explore the surface of Mars.
- Youth were also asked to create a solution to an issue within their community during a STEAM Contest hosted during National 4-H Week.

Creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking are the recipe to success with STEAM projects, and 4-Hers are twice as likely as other youth to want a science-related career. Even better, 4-H members are twice as likely to say they're 'good at' science compared to their peers.



Local students create marshmallow catapults during a junk drawer robotics program.





4-H youth exude confidence at the fair

Local fairs are a tradition and the season’s highlight for many 4-H members, but preparation begins long before youth step into the show ring. In the spring, youth attended a livestock quiz bowl where they were tested on feed, species, equipment, and meat cuts. During the livestock judging contest, 4-H members got a closer look at beef, swine, sheep, and goats. Youth evaluated each animal’s characteristics compared to others to determine the ideal standard of that particular class. This event gave participants a firsthand look at how to assess livestock that will enter the food system.

The county fairs allow youth to demonstrate the knowledge and skills gained throughout their time in 4-H. During general shows, creativity and skills were displayed as they were judged in areas like visual arts, photography, robotics, foods, and more. Those who received state delegation could travel to Springfield to show their projects at the Illinois State Fair.

The livestock shows allow 4-H members to display sportsmanship and exude confidence as they show the “best of the best.” Youth participating in showmanship showcased their communication skills as they spoke directly to each judge about the health and care of their animals. 4-H youth who raised beef, swine, sheep, goats, poultry, and rabbits for their annual projects could participate in the livestock auction. Local businesses, families, and supporters made the auction a success, with the entire proceeds of each sale going directly to local youth.



Iyona Newell displays her Cooking 101 project at the Jackson County 4-H General Show.



881
4-H Club Memberships



72
4-H Clubs



8,943
4-H Affiliations (4-H Experiences)



2,126
Fair Exhibits



27%
Youth engaged in 4-H (percent minority)



7%
Youth engaged in 4-H (percent Hispanic)

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating.
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact the event coordinator. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.

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