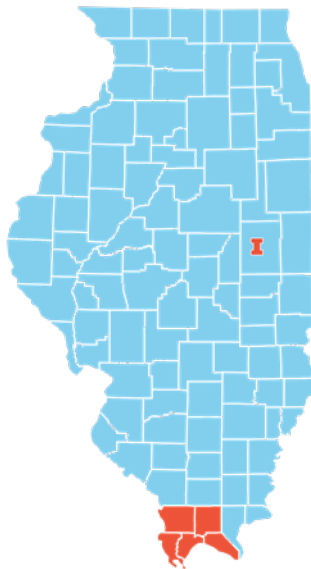


EXTENSION IN ACTION

Serving Alexander, Johnson,
Massac, Pulaski and Union Counties



Jody Johnson
County Director



A note from the County Director

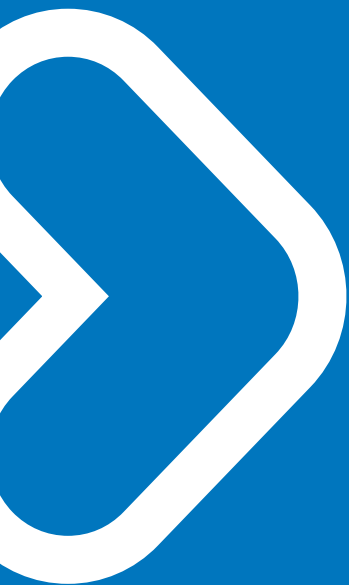
During 2022, I was fortunate to experience two life-changing professional development experiences. The first experience was a trip to the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Ala. The Legacy Museum provides a comprehensive history of the United States with a focus on the legacy of slavery.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and its impact on the North and coastal communities across America through the Domestic Slave Trade and Reconstruction, the museum provides detailed interactive content and compelling narratives. Lynching codified racial segregation and the emergence of over-incarceration in the 20th century are examined in depth and brought to life through film, images, and first-person narratives.

My other experience came from a professional development opportunity when I was invited to attend the Harvard Kennedy School of

Executive Leadership. The training focused on authentic leadership. Becoming an authentic leader is hard work and requires a focus on self-awareness and acceptance and embracing a “learning” versus “fixed” mindset as essential for effectively leading oneself and others. Leaders are not in the rear, telling others what to do, but should be out front, showing others what is expected to succeed.

It is such a privilege for me to lead some of the greatest people and be a part of some incredible work in our region. Please take time to review all the parts of this publication. Know that your tax dollars are what makes ALL THIS WONDERFUL WORK possible! I believe in operating fiscally conservative, using our local dollars to invest, and returning more state and federal dollars to our area. With the cooperation of our local county commissions, we’re able to leverage our local dollars to make some incredible impacts!



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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U of I president tours southern Illinois
 University of Illinois System President Tim Killeen, UIUC Chancellor Robert Jones, and senior administrators visited the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center and Rise Community Market in Cairo as part of the President's 2023 State Tour. The tour connects university leadership to partners and stakeholder around the state to discuss ongoing projects and opportunities. As a result of the visit, President Killeen established a taskforce to support Extension's partnerships and track progress.

Our Reach

-  **159**
Volunteers
-  **1,303**
Facebook followers
-  **2,481**
Website users

Welcome to the team
 The unit welcomes Anne Townsend to the team. Anne is the new natural resources, environment, and energy program coordinator. She will be assisting volunteers in the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs, along with volunteers for the two food donation gardens, Plant a Row, Watch COPE Grow, and The Pilot Garden: Cairo's Food Donation Garden. She brings an array of outdoor talent and a bachelor's degree in science, outdoor recreation, and leisure service management to the team.

University of Illinois President Timothy Killeen, Chancellor Robert J. Jones, Shelly Nickols-Richardson, German Bollero, Steve Wald, Senator Dale Fowler, Representative Patrick Windhorst, local stakeholders, and Illinois Extension staff met at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center.

My PI helps youth prepare for disasters
 Disasters can happen at any time, and communities need to be ready. Illinois Youth Preparedness Initiative (My PI), is a program designed to do just that, prepare communities.

The unit implemented the My PI program in two schools: Massac County High School and Vienna High School. Youth were trained on search and rescue operations, triage, and the importance of disaster relief kits. Together, the schools have graduated and certified 20 youth to help their communities with disaster relief and established 140 disaster relief kits in their communities.

During the training, youth met Thanet Natisri, a local water engineer from Marion that helped with the rescue of the 13 soccer players and their coach.



The youth were able to watch his documentary and the movie made on the rescue. This was an encouraging and inspirational time for the youth. They were able to see the importance of search and rescue in the time of natural disasters.



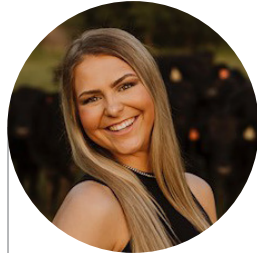
These youth from Massac County High School graduated from the My PI course.



Illinois 4-H members take on new roles as Illinois 4-H Ambassadors

The 4-H motto is “To make the best better.” One goal of the 4-H program is to build strong and confident leaders that are willing to represent 4-H at the next level. The unit has three youth that have become 4-H ambassadors and enhanced their roles and responsibilities.

Abagayle Britton is a 4-H livestock ambassador representing Pulaski/Alexander counties. She exhibited livestock at the state and national level. Currently, Abagayle is preparing sessions for a state conference for younger youth to grow their livestock knowledge.



Abagayle Britton – Livestock Ambassador

Braden May is a shooting sports ambassador from Massac County. Braden has excelled at the state level and has competed at the national level. Recently, Braden represented the five counties in Atlanta, Ga. at the National 4-H Congress.



Braden May – Shooting Sports Ambassador

Kaitlyn May has transitioned from a 4-H healthy living ambassador to a collegiate national 4-H healthy living ambassador. Kaitlyn has presented and planned the 4-H National Healthy Living Summit for the past two years.



Kaitlyn May – National 4-H Healthy Living Ambassador

Youth that represent their clubs at a county level are an inspiration to building young leaders, but to have youth rise to the state and national level is an accomplishment that tops these students resumes!

Building young leaders today for a better tomorrow

Three teen leader trainings were conducted by 4-H staff in collaboration with eight local schools. Separate trainings were held in the spring, with joint trainings occurring in May and September. The opportunity to train together was met with enthusiasm by the students and staff. They unlocked Ag Innovators Kits to show over 200 youth the importance of agriculture. In September, Extension staff with 4-H responsibilities partnered with Soil and Water Conservation and Farm Bureau to train over 120 teens on five different projects that they, in turn, taught to younger school audiences.

These school partnerships resulted in 32 classroom clubs reaching over 300 youth. The four counties in this unit were in the top five for youth enrollment in the state.



329%

Increased enrollment in Pulaski/Alexander Counties



146%

Increased enrollment in Johnson County



93%

Increased enrollment in Union County

Our Reach



815

Club Memberships



75

4-H Clubs





EMBRYOLOGY OFFERED TO AREA STUDENTS

New 4-H programming on embryology created an exciting spring for classroom youth. Ken Koelkebeck, University of Illinois poultry specialist, trained teachers from four area school units on chick embryology. Teachers and youth learned how to set up incubators to hatch chicks and how to care for them the first few days of their lives. Century school excelled in this program, hatching not only chicks, but ducklings and quail, as well. The schools hatched over 100 chicks and feathered friends. This was the first year for the program in the lower five counties in over a decade and will become a signature program for 4-H youth in the south!



4-H IS LEARNING BY DOING: AREA YOUTH EXCEL IN STATE CONTESTS

4-H project work and curriculum provides youth with opportunities to learn and grow. Activities, such as the 4-H general show and STEM-related club work, provide opportunities to showcase their talents and knowledge. More than 100 members exhibited in the 4-H General Show, showcasing over 500 learning projects. Some of the youth advanced to the Illinois State Fair. Union County Robotics took two teams of nine youth to the state robotics competition. They earned five different awards. Although our county populations may be small, 4-H in the deep south is showcased at an elite level and has many state-level champions across many project areas!



EXPLORE THE WORLD AT INTERNATIONAL NIGHT

International Night is an annual event held at Shawnee Community College with record turnout and community engagement. More than 120 club members participate in Passport to the World, a project that encourages exploration of other countries. Youth are exposed to customs, traditions, festivals, and food from many different countries and cultures worldwide. 4-H staff partner with foreign exchange students, international collegiate students, and adult volunteers with personal experiences that help advance youth's understanding of the world. Two clubs advanced to Illinois State Fair based on their presentation and engagement with the public.



WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD

A Career Exploration, Decision Making, and Money Management Program for Young Adults

2023

DON'T BREAK THE BANK: MAKE SOUND FINANCIAL DECISIONS

4-H prides itself in making the best better and part of that is educating youth how to make wise financial decisions. Welcome to the Real World, a financial literacy program developed by Illinois Extension allows youth to simulate real-life spending and earning choices. Seven schools and over 350 youth participated in the program. Kristi Stout, 4-H youth development educator for the area, chaired the state committee which updated the curriculum used by counties throughout the state.







Reaching new audiences with nature programming



A needs assessment showed that many residents of the southern five counties enjoy spending time outdoors with their family, so Educator Erin Garrett created new multi-generational programming aimed at reaching new audiences in all communities of the unit.

Magnificent Moths

Held during National Moth Week, “Magnificent Moths” encouraged families to learn about moths. Fifty-five participants visited 12 stations to learn what a moth is, how to attract them at night, and what their caterpillars look like. Master Naturalist volunteers and Extension staff dressed up as moths to engage youth.

Boo at the Slough

“Boo at the Slough” is a Halloween-themed event designed to help families learn about misunderstood creatures of the swamp. Hosted at the Cache River Wetlands Center, Master Naturalists and Friends of the Cache members dressed up like swamp creatures. Sixty-five participants came out to participate in games and activities.

Volunteers dressed up as various moths for “Magnificent Moths.”

Pumpkin Extravaganza

“Pumpkin Extravaganza” is a collaborative effort between Extension SNAP-Education, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, 4-H, and the natural resource, environment, and energy team. Staff and volunteers engaged with 202 participants through walk-by stations, games, and activities, all celebrating pumpkins.

All About Caterpillars

New in 2022, Illinois Extension partnered with local libraries to deliver “All About Caterpillars,” an educational program for youth. Youth learned about caterpillars while parents and grandparents received resources on pollinators, native plants, and trees. Local library staff were very enthusiastic about the partnership. Illinois Extension reached 77 youth and 51 adults at nine local libraries.



Volunteers dressed up as various swamp creatures for “Boo at the Slough.”



Strong partnerships lead to healthier food access

Extension community outreach workers provide nutrition education to the communities' youth, adults, and families. Programming is delivered at area schools, community events, and summer programs, sometimes in partnership with area agencies. They provide individuals and families with the resources to make healthier lifestyle choices by offering curriculum for schools, as well as adult or family curriculum.

"Illinois Junior Chef" continues to be a leading program provided by Extension for the youth in the community. Youth learn kitchen skills and the importance of healthy cooking. "Illinois Junior Chef" was held over a five-week span at various locations throughout the five counties this past summer. At the end of each cooking school, youth received basic kitchen utensils to help them cook for their families in their own kitchens. The program reached about 100 youth.

Illinois Extension partnered with Arrowleaf for "Illinois Junior Chef." Each family was given a box of grocery items to feed a family of four using recipes that were taught during the program. Arrowleaf also secured funds to provide each family a gas card and a \$40 gift card to a grocery store of the family's choice.

Youth engaged in healthy activities during "At The River."



54
Partnerships



24
Number of Schools



30
Number of other organizations



8,000+
Total number reached



SNAP-Ed staff, youth, and Arrowleaf staff at Illinois Junior Chef held in Cairo.



Master Gardener and Master Naturalist impacts are many

Volunteers make an impact on their communities

Trained Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers are passionate individuals, dedicated to giving back to their communities and leaving a positive impact. This year, volunteers removed trash and invasive species from our national forest and state parks, prepared herbarium specimens for the Plants of Concern program, gathered information from visitors at Snake Road, and shared knowledge with others at nature-themed family events. Five new interns joined the current volunteers.

Slowing the spread of invasive species

Invasive species spread rapidly through forests and natural areas. Without checks, they can quickly take over an area. Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists removed garlic mustard, bush honeysuckle, and autumn olive this year, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, Friends of the Shawnee National Forest, River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In total, 163 pounds of garlic mustard, 3,312 bush honeysuckle saplings, and numerous truck and trailer loads of autumn olive trees were removed from public lands during nine invasive species pulls.



Master Gardeners participated in the Herbarium specimen mounting workshop.



Learn more about these programs
go.illinois.edu/ajmpumasternaturalist
go.illinois.edu/ajmpumastergardener



Illinois Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and Extension staff participate with an Invasive Species pull.

Cleaning up our forests

Trash buildup in parks and forests continues to be a problem, especially with intentional dumping of large items. Volunteers participated in trash blasts to remove this trash and dispose of it properly. Illinois Extension worked in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, Friends of the Shawnee National Forest, and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteers collected 4,045 pounds of trash during six trash blasts across five locations.

Preserving rare plants

Understanding where rare plants occur and the size of their populations is crucial for preservation efforts. The Plants of Concern program was recently established in southern Illinois. Illinois Extension offered an indoor volunteer opportunity for Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers during the summer and winter months. Volunteers prepared herbarium specimens of rare plants, collected as part of the program, to be cataloged at the Southern Illinois University Herbarium. Volunteers prepared over 150 specimens this year.



21
Volunteers



1,057.5
Master Naturalist Volunteer Hours



261.5
Master Gardener Volunteer Hours



\$39,500
Value of Volunteer Time



Planting trees for a cleaner tomorrow



The devastating effects of climate change can be seen throughout the communities of southern Illinois. The 4-H Green Communities Tree Program tries to alleviate some of the effects with the addition of hundreds of oak trees. Trees are essential; they provide cleaner air, improve the water we drink and the soil for planting crops, and help with soil runoff so we can live healthier lives. The tree planting was done in collaboration with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Two oak tree savannas were planted in Massac, Pulaski, and Alexander counties. These savannas included 50 different oak trees at Fort Massac State Park and Egyptian School. Teen leaders learned the importance of the savannas, as well as the importance of creating a better future for the next generation.

Through these volunteer efforts, the trees are taking root and growing to provide greener communities for many years to come. Efforts are underway to plant savannas in Union, Johnson, and Pulaski counties. 4-H is striving to leave the environment better than they found it to ensure it can be enjoyed for generations to come!

Teen Leaders from Massac County High School planted trees at Fort Massac State Park for the 4-H Green Communities Tree Program.



Teen Leaders participated in a tree planting with 4-H Green Communities Tree Program at Egyptian School.



Growing food in our communities, for our communities

Food insecurity is a widespread issue in Illinois' southernmost counties. This lack of food, especially healthy food, decreases the likelihood that residents will live healthy lives. Extension grew 1,900 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables at garden sites in Cairo and Metropolis this year that were donated to local pantries.

Reaching new goals in Cairo

After a successful first year, Illinois Extension set new goals for The Pilot Garden for 2022, planning for three seasons of growth, more volunteer support, and a larger crop. With community help, these goals were achieved, helping to combat food insecurity in Cairo. Partners and sponsors continue to support the garden with funding to cover water costs and donations of mulch, pallets, plants, picnic table, and stump seats. Volunteers gave 390 hours of time which resulted in 1,250 pounds of produce donated to Daystar Community Programs.

SNAP-Ed provided nutrition education at the garden and pantry sites to complement the harvested produce. Signage, recipes, recipe demos, storage improvements, and other nutrition education materials were shared at the pantry.

The natural resources, environment, and energy team collaborated with the 4-H team to create a monthly garden program for students at Cairo Elementary called "Garden Tales." Each month, pre-K through sixth grade students came to the garden to learn about nature, listen to a story, complete an activity, and work in the garden. Between 90 and 140 students attend each month.



Anne Terry, garden volunteer with NAACP and The Lion's Club, harvested produce grown at The Pilot Garden, Cairo's food donation garden.



Learn more about these projects
facebook.com/ThePilotGarden
facebook.com/PlantaRowWatchCOPEGrow



A fresh start in Metropolis

Illinois Extension formed a new partnership with the Regional Office of Education #21 and moved the Metropolis garden to a lot next to the ROE building, improving visibility and allowing for a fenced-in location. Ag students from Massac High School, students from StarQuest Academy, and community volunteers re-located the garden. The city of Metropolis installed a new water meter, and Joppa FFA students installed a fence. Volunteers gave 235 hours of time, growing 650 pounds of produce for COPE.

SNAP-Ed staff continued to work with COPE food pantry staff to improve storage and display of donated produce, in addition to other nutrition messaging to help clients choose healthier items. Educational materials were shared at the garden and pantry site, including recipes and recipe videos, to learn how to store and prepare fresh garden produce.

CAIRO RESULTS



1,250
Pounds of Produce Grown



390
Volunteer Hours Recorded



\$11,695
Value of Volunteer Time

METROPOLIS RESULTS



650
Pounds of Produce Grown



235
Volunteer Hours Recorded



\$7,035
Value of Volunteer Time



Food Security Summit team members.



Increasing food access

Community partners addressed food access and nutrition security during the Southern Illinois Food Security Summit in September 2022. The event allowed agencies and organizations an opportunity to collaborate, learn, and prioritize healthy food access initiatives for southern Illinoisans. There were more than 120 participants at the summit that represented elected officials, city government, food banks and pantries, early care and education programs, schools, health departments, health care, and social service agencies from the lower 16 counties of southern Illinois, all working toward a more food secure southern Illinois.

There were many partnerships and successes that supported food access and food security efforts across southern Illinois. The goal is to keep the momentum going and build upon these successes. Building off strategies that were identified during the 2021 summit, *From Food Insecurity to Food Equity: A Roadmap to End Hunger in Illinois*, this year, participants were asked to rank a variety of strategies that support the four USDA Actions on Nutrition Security.

Seven mini grants totaling \$8,000 were awarded. Applicants submitted project proposals describing how their projects will support food and nutrition security by increasing healthier food access in their communities. The grants were possible through SIU School of Medicine - Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development. The awardees will present the progress of their projects at next year's summit, scheduled for Sept. 12, 2023, at John A. Logan College.



Agriculture Equity and Food Insecurity Council Task Force

Sarita Sawyer (right), Extension community outreach worker, has been invited to join the Agriculture Equity and Food Insecurity Council Task Force with Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton (left) and a team of select individuals to help improve food access in the area. This work hopes to break down barriers of food access and food insecurity struggles in vulnerable areas.

The task force encourages community members to be more involved in improving grocery access and organic farming. The task force is also charged with improving community partnerships and removing barriers for agriculture growers of color. These strategies will help communities have improve access to healthy, nutrient-dense foods.



Strong partnerships create healthy food access

With many communities in the area facing high food and nutrition insecurity rates, Extension’s SNAP-Education team continues to work with local food pantries in a variety of ways. The team provides nutrition education, food and recipe demonstrations, food storage and preparation information, signage, staff training, site assessment, connections to resources and funding opportunities, and technical assistance.

Many local pantries are also engaged with the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network. Quarterly meetings provide collaborative learning opportunities, information and resource sharing, and funding opportunities. This year, these pantries, including Daystar Community Programs, Arrowleaf, The Table-Shawnee Worship Center, COPE, Bethel Temple Evangelist, Salem Lutheran Church, and Jesus El Senor Methodist Church, received nearly \$2,000 in mini grants.

A partnership between Salvation Army of Southern Illinois and Tristate Food Bank, with support from Illinois Extension, provided pop-up mobile food distributions across the region. Fresh food items, including local farm produce from Tri-State’s distribution warehouse in Vienna, is picked up and distributed by the Salvation Army and a team of volunteers. Mobile food distributions were held in Johnson and Alexander counties.

Building Resilient, Inclusive Communities

SNAP-Ed continues working with IPHI, TriState Food Bank, and food pantry partners in year two of the BRIC project. This project has helped expand pickup, delivery, and distribution of high quality, fresh produce provided by TriState Food Bank’s Vienna Distribution Warehouse and has supported the implementation of nutrition policy and healthy food access



Watch the healthy video series
go.illinois.edu/healthyrecipesforyou

Volunteers with the Salvation Army set up for one of several mobile food distributions.

strategies in food pantries. In addition, SNAP Ed staff created a display area at the Vienna Warehouse to provide nutrition education materials and resources for food pantries to access. With the support of this project, TriState has provided cold storage to several new pantry sites in Alexander and Pulaski counties.

Multi-State Share Table Pilot Program

The Share Table pilot program was created through the Critical Agricultural Research and Extension Grant (CARE) to help address food insecurity. A train-the-trainer model is being piloted to share Table resources in schools across the FNS Midwest region. Cobden School District in Union County participates in the program. They received an \$800 stipend for equipment, signage, and other materials to support a successful share table implementation. Program Coordinator Lacey Barnhill and Educator Lizz Cooley-Questelle will provide training and technical assistance to the school district, as well as conduct observations and data collection during the 2023 school year.

Healthy recipes for you

Community outreach workers collaborated with two other neighboring units to produce a video series featuring healthy recipes. Marketing Coordinator Heather Willis worked with SNAP-Ed staff at the Community Kitchen in Massac County to create short, engaging videos which are used across the unit for health education. Seasonal recipe demos and Eat.Move.Save. messaging was recorded and shared at pantries, on social media, at booths, and during programs. These videos have received hundreds of views, and several are included in the video playlist recently sent to the Family Community Resource Center offices across the state.



Future site of Rise Community Market.



Cairo creates its own grocery co-op to address food access

The HEAT (Health Equity Achieved Together) Project strives to bring healthy, nutritious food sources into very rural and isolated food-deserts of communities in southern Illinois.

Cairo lost its last grocery store in December 2015, after serving the community for over 70 years. This left residents with no retail option for fresh food. Two-thirds of the town's population travel over 30 minutes to shop for groceries at least once a month (often out of state).

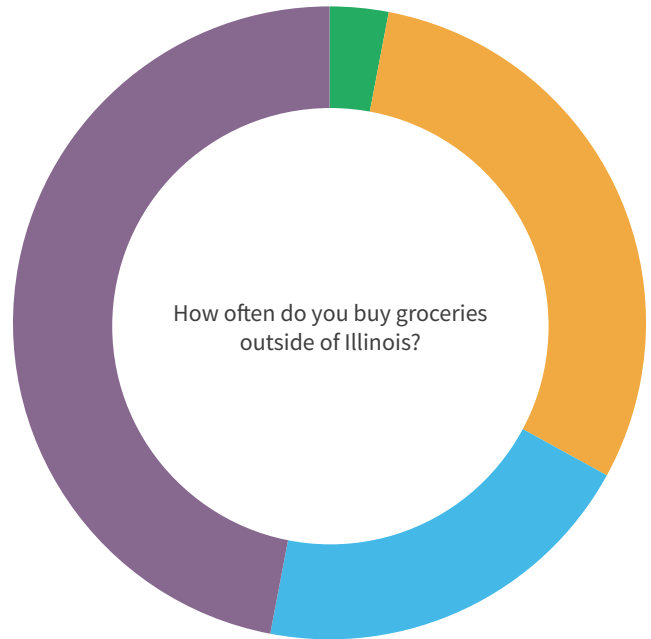
In the spring of 2022, a group of citizens from diverse backgrounds came together to form a steering committee to create a community-owned cooperative store. With consultation and technical assistance from Illinois Extension and the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University, the group met weekly in May 2022.

Soon, the group had developed by-laws and policies, filed Articles of Incorporation, drafted a business plan, and sought grants to launch the Rise Community Market Co-op. In the fall of 2022, the Co-op began selling memberships and shares of preferred stock to raise the remaining capital to renovate the former Subway location at 3010 Sycamore St. in Cairo.

Grocery co-op organizers partnered with the Highway Construction Careers Training Program of John A. Logan and Shawnee Community Colleges to provide space in the co-op building in exchange for materials and labor to remodel the store as a training project for their students. Kroger corporation made generous donations of surplus equipment, including shelves, shopping carts, displays, and tables. Through the work and dedication of over a dozen volunteers, along with more than \$250,000 in grants, Rise Community Market is slated to open in early 2023.

This helps us economically. We have plenty of needs in our community. It inspires the community to see dreams come true. It's vital our community comes together to make this thrive.

Board Chair



- 3% Never
- 30% About once a week
- 20% About once a month
- 47% A few times a month

30%

respondents cannot obtain food within a 15-minute drive of their home

96.5%

survey respondents say they buy groceries outside of Illinois at least once a month

46.5%

report they buy groceries out of state a few times a month

30+ miles away from their home

Closest out-of-state supermarkets carrying a full selection of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy

31-60 minutes

Driving duration to buy groceries

68.4%

survey respondents say it is difficult to eat fruits, vegetables, or lean meats because they are not available in their community

Grocery access survey for Cairo Residents conducted by Illinois Extension in the Spring of 2022



Follow the Rise Community Market on Facebook
go.illinois.edu/risecommunitymarket

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Shawnee Community College

By Appointment Only



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.

The Illinois Nutrition Education Programs are funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

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