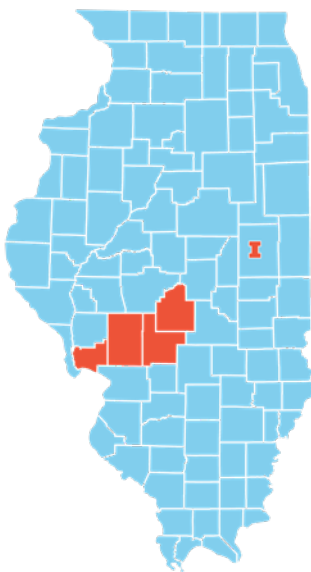


# EXTENSION IN ACTION

Serving Christian, Jersey, Macoupin,  
and Montgomery Counties



Amanda Cole  
County Director



# A message from the County Director

As the past year wraps up, I am also finishing my tenth year as our unit’s county director. It has been my pleasure to serve Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties in this capacity. I can’t wait to see what happens during the next ten years of service.

I would also like to give a special thanks to Lisa Peterson for serving as the acting county director during most of the year while I served in an additional role as the interim associate director of field operations for University of Illinois Extension. She was the boots on the ground daily, working hand in hand with the staff and volunteers on programming and community service projects.

This year’s impact report features the 2022 Extension Community Partner Award winners which include Northside Veterinary Clinic, Peace United Church in Christ, Macoupin County Historical Society, and The Journal-News. More information on their partnership is available on pages 4 and 5 of the report.

Other highlights for the year include Dudley Smith Initiative in Christian County, a rainscaping course in Carlinville, poverty simulation for all educators and staff at the Jerseyville Community School District, another fantastic year of Camp Panther with Litchfield School District, and the unit-wide 4-H officers and leaders full day of training and volunteering.

The biggest collaborative undertaking this past year was the three-year needs assessment. Over 100 interviews and surveys provide feedback on the needs of the four-county area,

with the following four items rising to the top: thriving youth, workforce preparedness and advancement, chronic disease prevention and management, and social and emotion health. These priorities will guide the plan of work for the unit for the next three years.

Finally, I want to share some of the awards staff won at the 2022 Illinois Extension Annual Conference:

- Kate Harding, Macoupin County, won Program Support Excellence Award
- Lisa White, Montgomery County, won Office Support Excellence Award
- Lisa Peterson, nutrition and wellness educator, won Excellence in Extension Award.

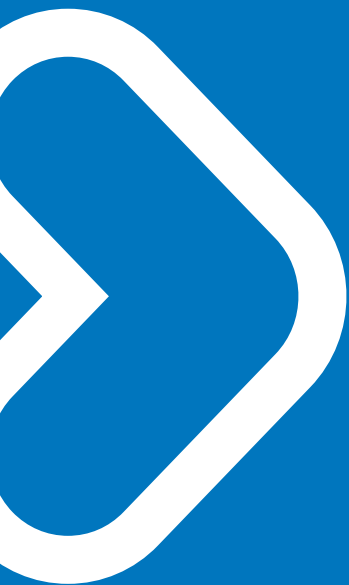
Only one winner is awarded throughout the state each year in each of these categories.

In addition:

- Sara Marten, youth development educator, was a member of the group that won Team Excellence in Innovation Award
- Andrew Holsinger, horticulture educator, was a member of the group that won Program Evaluation Excellence Award for 2022.

I hope you enjoy reading the stories provided in this report. Thank you for your continued support. I can’t wait to see what 2023 and beyond bring!

Sincerely,  
Amanda Cole  
County Extension 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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Former United States Representative Rodney Davis visited the Dudley Smith Farm outside Pana to learn about the latest research on the farm. Laura Christianson, former University of Illinois associate professor and faculty Extension specialist, and Jack Erisman who sits on Dudley Smith Advisory Board are also pictured.



## Dudley Smith Initiative provides funding for 4-H learning research

The experiential learning model is a vital part of the 4-H learning experience, allowing youth to experience a hands-on activity, reflect on their experiences, and apply what they've learned to future experiences, careers, or ideas. In partnership with University of Illinois campus faculty and graduate assistants, the 4-H program in Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties participated in a research project. This project was funded through a grant from the Dudley Smith Initiative to study the experiential learning process in formal and non-formal settings and identify the role that reflection plays in learning and retaining information.

As a part of the study, five local classrooms and ten 4-H clubs received six lessons focused on Illinois agricultural commodities, including pumpkins, dairy cattle, and corn. Each lesson focused on delivering information through the experiential learning model, which led the youth through a hands-on activity first, followed by specific reflection exercises, and targeted youth in fourth and fifth grades.

Data is still being gathered and analyzed for publication in a future research journal.

## Extension recognizes, thanks Community Partner Award winners



Illinois Extension's impact is enhanced when creating partnerships with like-minded organizations, foundations, and corporations committed to supporting Extension programs. Illinois Extension provides researched-based programs where youth and adults learn new skills and gain knowledge in an area that interests them.

The local Extension Council sponsors the Community Partner Award that recognizes a community partner each year. Illinois Extension is incredibly proud to award to four businesses and organizations within the unit:

- Northside Veterinary Clinic in Taylorville**
- Peace United Church of Christ in Jerseyville**
- Macoupin County Historical Society in Carlinville**
- The Journal-News in Hillsboro**

The Extension Council is a volunteer board that serves in an advisory role, cooperating with Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, evaluating, and financing Extension outreach that meets the needs, interests, and resources of the local communities served.





### NORTHSIDE VETERINARY CLINIC

The veterinary clinic was selected for its continued support of the Christian County 4-H program. For several years, veterinarian Dr. Randy Thompson and the clinic graciously donate their weigh station, shed, and services to help with the 4-H beef weigh-in. Their clinic has helped make the beef weigh-ins run as smoothly as possible each year. They also provide the 4-H program with a judge for the cat, dog, and rabbit 4-H shows. “Community partners are what helps make our programs successful. We are grateful for Northside Veterinary Clinic’s continuous support to 4-H,” says Alexis Friesland, 4-H youth development program coordinator.



### PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church was selected for its continued support to the Jersey County 4-H program. It continues to donate its fellowship hall for use by Jersey County 4-H for the annual Soup Fest fundraiser. This generous donation allows Extension to raise money each year for 4-H programming. “Supporters like Peace United Church of Christ allow Jersey County 4-H to positively impact youth throughout the county and is a valued community partner. We are grateful for their dedication to 4-H,” says Jessica Jaffry, Jersey County 4-H youth development program coordinator.



### MACOUPIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society was selected for its continued support to the Macoupin County Master Gardener program. They have supported the Master Gardeners locally by providing space for demonstration gardens and a location for the spring plant sale that raises money dedicated to various community projects. “Macoupin County Historical Society is a valued supporter of our local Master Gardeners and an incredible community member. We are fortunate to have great assistance from county organizations,” says Andrew Holsinger, Extension horticulture educator.



### THE JOURNAL-NEWS

The Journal-News was selected for its exemplary service to the local Extension office. It promotes programs throughout the years and is always willing to run Extension news articles. They provided help making The Story Project, a Montgomery County 4-H program, successful. They provided proofreading and published stories and photos 4-H members wrote. Their staff served as volunteer instructors for The Story Project and continue to help with workshops and judge 4-H shows.







## Rainscaping helps improve soil

In partnership with Purdue Extension and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, a rainscaping course was offered in Carlinville. The program was held in collaboration with Loveless Park which offered an established rain garden to be used for maintenance and restoration demonstration. During the five-session workshop, participants developed goals, objectives, strategies, and timetable for planting and maintaining a rain garden. The Macoupin County Master Gardener program will provide plants and a tour in the spring of 2023 to further the development of the rainscaping at Loveless Park. Participants indicated they increased their knowledge in all topics presented that will improve their ability to create rainscaping projects.



Horticulture educator Andrew Holsinger and participant Dan McCandless discussed renovations of the rain garden at Loveless Park.



## Youth get in the holiday spirit

Andrew Holsinger led a holiday wreath workshop for youth. At the workshop 12 participants learned the floriculture production of holiday wreaths, as well as traits to look for in materials and proper care and storage. This workshop gave youth an opportunity to learn a new skill. The program was well received and created some holiday cheer before the new year.



Participants used natural materials such as fresh evergreens, foliage, pinecones, and berries to create their unique wreaths.

## Christian County Master Gardeners explore trees, landscapes

Trees are an important resource to the environment. Beyond the ecological and environmental benefits, these extremely valuable landscape plants also improve mental health. Christian County Master Gardeners hosted a tree walk at the hilltop farm of Linda Kehias who was an early graduate of the Master Gardener program. The family farm is a budding arboretum, featuring both familiar and unique trees suitable to Central Illinois. Brochures provided general information about the selected trees for the walk. Participants toured the grounds and could see and learn about the varieties of trees firsthand.



Tree Walk participants walked around the property to look at an array of trees and the beautiful fall scenery.

## Macoupin County Master Gardeners care for courthouse gardens

The Macoupin County Courthouse gardens in Carlinville have been installed, expanded, and maintained for years by the Macoupin County Master Gardeners. In late 2019, new landscape surrounding the county's War Memorial were installed, with subsequent installations in 2020 and 2021. The garden includes a mix of native plants to traditional and non-native ornamental plants, serving as a model of sustainable landscaping. This garden highlights the integration of native plants with well-known, commonly sold non-native species. The Master Gardeners will enhance this landscape with additional plantings and install educational signage on the courthouse grounds. This year the Master Gardeners donated five trees to be planted.





## Increase physical activity and mindfulness

Physical activity is essential for physical and mental health. In Jersey County, 35% of the population is considered obese, compared to the state average of 32% (County Health Rankings, 2022). The 4-H youth development and the nutrition and wellness Extension programs offered a walking club which included a series of classes on the importance of physical activity and nutrition. Jerseyville’s Wock Lake has a walking path and a pavilion surrounding a lake and offers a safe and accessible way for community members to be active and learn.

“Walk Wock Lake” includes a wellness lesson, stretching, and 30 to 40 minutes of walking. The weekly classes covered the importance of exercise, identifying types of exercises, measuring heart rate, hydration, healthy pre-and post-workout snacks, and mindfulness. Thirteen yard signs provide wellness information along the three-quarter-mile walking loop. Each sign featured activities to complete before getting to the next signs. These activities covered emotional health and mindfulness, nutrition, and physical activities.



One of the many signs that were displayed along the walking path at Wock Lake that included activity challenges, nutrition tips, and physical activity tips that encouraged residents to move more.



60%  
Increase in knowledge of mindfulness



91%  
Plan to come back to Wock Lake to exercise



91%  
Plan to use information provided from the signs

## Have you experienced poverty?

Several educators from Jersey County participated in a poverty simulation offered by Illinois Extension at Jersey Community High School. The “Community Action Poverty Simulation” (CAPS) promotes a greater understanding of poverty. The simulation addresses the challenges of living with limited resources and an abundance of stress.

This simulation was eye-opening! It is a great way for people who have not faced challenges to understand what our students and even their parents might be experiencing.

Jersey County Teacher

During the simulation, participants role-play the lives of low-income families, from single parents trying to care for their children to senior citizens trying to maintain their self-sufficiency on social security, all while living on a limited budget. The experience includes four 15-minute sessions, each representing one week of providing for your family and maintaining your home.

Poverty is a reality for many individuals and families; however, unless a person has experienced poverty, it is challenging to understand. CAPS bridges the gap from misconception to understanding and is an interactive, immersive experience. It sensitizes community participants to the realities of poverty and is based on real clients and their lives.

After the simulation, participants discussed what they experienced and brainstormed ideas for community change.



Participants visiting the grocery store are trying to figure out how to pay for groceries while only being given a limited income.







Everyone deserves to be celebrated!



4-H members from Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties packaged 150 birthday bags for local food pantries. Each birthday bag contained a cake mix, icing, candles, and party supplies, such as banners, plates, napkins, party noise makers, and balloons. The bags were delivered to food pantries by 4-H members and club leaders. Everyone deserves to have a celebration, and through this community service project, now youth everywhere can.



### YLT experience develops youth leaders

The Youth Leadership Team is a 4-H club for teenagers. It allows 4-H members to give back to the 4-H program while enhancing their leadership skills. The team is actively involved in program planning and teaching workshops for local youth in Christian County. They provide feedback to the 4-H program coordinator and always think of fun and engaging programs that can bring in more youth.

The team expanded to 14 members from various 4-H clubs throughout the county. During the fall season, the YLT organized a 4-H pumpkin painting workshop, a community service project where they made blankets that were donated to a local hospital, and a 4-H winter crafts workshop.



Christian County 4-H Youth Leadership Team members hold tie blankets made at a workshop. The blankets were donated to Taylorville Memorial Hospital to be passed out to patients.



### Principles of meat science

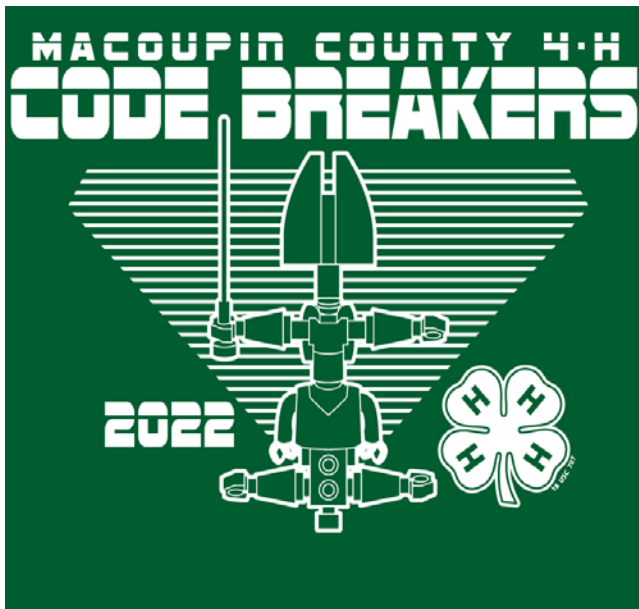
Jersey County youth took a deep dive into meat science from U of I agriculture research specialist and meat judging coach Brandon Klehm. Klehm worked with local youth to explore the production, judging, quality, and marketing of meats.

The primary focus of this workshop was beef. Participants learned to identify and grade retail cuts. They also learned the locations each cut comes from on the animal. Participants learned how to cut the meat and what spices and seasonings pair best with each cut. They put their new skills to the test on the grill and test their cuts' internal temperature. Kids and their parents learned a wealth of meat science knowledge.



Jersey 4-H members learned about spices and flavor pairings for different cuts of meat.





Robotics team member Lane Gowin created a robot that was used as inspiration for their team t-shirts. T-shirt design was created by Cubby Hole in Carlinville.



## Teamwork and dedication pays off

Greg and Stefanie Behme's son, Alex, has a passion for technology and a knack for building and programming, so in 2017, the couple started a 4-H robotics club for Macoupin County. For five years, the club has averaged 20 members each year. This year, the robotics team attended its third state contest, and all their hard work as a team paid off. The team worked together to build and program a robot for the State 4-H Robotics competition.



Macoupin County 4-H Robotics Code Breakers

Members expand their skills and experience to improve each competition. This year, they brought home some hardware, earning first place in the advanced division.

The competition tests the club's ability to work together to complete tasks using creativity and skills learned. This club provides an opportunity for advancement in programming, building, and problem-solving skills. The club gives a platform for youth with similar interests to come together to have fun working with robotics and technology.

## 4-H program keeps youth minds sharp during summer



Summer is a vital time to help youth find and continue learning experiences. Illinois Extension staff continued a partnership with the Litchfield School District, providing hands-on activities and lessons during the school's Camp Panther program. For three weeks in early June, Extension staff and 4-H teen teachers delivered a variety of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), agricultural literacy, physical fitness, teamwork, communication styles, and environmental science activities to nearly 170 youth in grades kindergarten through fifth grade.

This is the second year of the partnership, and planning for summer 2023 is underway. It is an interdisciplinary programming effort, involving staff from the 4-H, agricultural literacy, youth development, and community and economic development program areas.



Youth at Camp Panther play in a farm sensory box where they looked and felt for different items they might see on a farm, such as pigs, soybeans, eggs, flowers, bees, apples, and more.

Hands-on learning experiences included lessons on the importance of communication styles with a focus on nonverbal communication, such as body language and eye contact; importance of yoga and how it can help with mindfulness; understanding teamwork and how to agree and disagree with people; and learning more about animal by feeling their fur.

The program creates an environment that supports and grows thriving youth in communities, with lessons adapted based on the target audience served.



## Teaching the importance of agriculture

Thanks to sponsors, the Agricultural Literacy Program has shared the importance of agriculture and its role in our everyday lives. Ag in the Classroom continues to reach students and educators through classroom programs, professional developments for teachers, hands-on learning resources, and newsletters.

### Christian and Montgomery County



8,475  
Students reached in 2022



309  
Educators reached in 2022



22,425  
Contacts with students and educators in 2022



Rebecca Livingston, Christian and Montgomery counties agricultural literacy program coordinator, teaches kids how important it is to maintain healthy soil for the environment.

### Macoupin County



3,257  
Students reached in 2022



559  
Educators reached in 2022



12,650  
Contacts with students and educators in 2022



Third graders at Shipman Elementary learn about trees.

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education



SNAP-Education works with Illinois families in need to make healthier choices easier. Making healthy choices can be challenging, especially when families are struggling financially. Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed provides practical healthy eating and physical activity solutions for families and participates in strategic local, regional, and statewide partnerships to transform the health of Illinois communities.

Through classes, workshops, and collaboration with community partners, SNAP-education positively affects families and communities by using research-based solutions to encourage healthier nutrition and physical activity choices.

SNAP-Ed works with individuals and families who qualify for or receive benefits to help them manage their food budgets, as well as the agencies, schools, and organizations that serve them. To continue to meet the needs of families within the unit, the SNAP-Ed program has continued to have face-to-face classes and this year offered five-day cooking schools for local youth.



Meghan Cope, Macoupin County community worker, SNAP-Ed, shows youth participants how to use MyPlate to create a healthy eating routine.

## Reach and Impact of SNAP-Education



- 13% Virtual or online
- 87% Face-to-face



- 12% Other
- 88% White



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## STAFF OF CHRISTIAN, JERSEY, MACOUPIN, AND MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Amanda Cole County Director	Valerie Belusko Community and Economic Development Program Coordinator	Rebecca Livingston Agricultural Literacy Program Coordinator	Lisa White Montgomery County Office Support Specialist
Andrew Holsinger Horticulture Educator	Alexis Friesland 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator	Connie Niemann Agricultural Literacy Program Coordinator	Lisa Klaus Macoupin County Office Support Associate
Sara Marten 4-H Youth Development Educator	Kate Harding 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator	Meghan Cope SNAP-Ed Community Worker	Sara Isenberg Christian County Office Support Assistant
Lisa Peterson Nutrition and Wellness Educator	Jessica Jaffry 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator	Taylor Pope SNAP-Ed Community Worker	Penny Brennan Jersey County Clerical
Jennifer Russell Community and Economic Development Educator		Cassie O'Connell Marketing & Communications Program Coordinator	Beth Groves 4-H Assistant

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## EXTENSION COUNCIL

Conner Ashlock Jerseyville, Jersey County	Paige Cox Palmyra, Macoupin County	Alicia Gullidge Assumption, Christian County	Venise McWard Taylorville, Christian County
Connie Beck Litchfield, Montgomery County	Mark Dugger Carlinville, Macoupin County	Heather Haley Carlinville, Macoupin County	Dennis Rahe Carlinville, Macoupin County
Tiffany Blasa Grafton, Jersey County	Dr. Jerome Epplin Litchfield, Montgomery County	Sandy Hefner Jerseyville, Jersey County	Terry Trader Hillsboro, Montgomery County
Maureen Bruns Rosamond, Christian County	Caleb Grover Stonington, Christian County	Vicki Joiner Carlinville, Macoupin County	

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## OFFICE SUPPORT

Donna Abbott	Belinda Ernst	Anthony Joiner
Jeanette Baker	Penny Grundy	Carol Strohbeck
Rebekah Cloninger	Vickie Housch	Dayse Velasquez



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## OFFICE INFORMATION

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Hillsboro, Illinois 62049  
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Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Christian County Extension

1120 N. Webster St.  
Taylorville, Illinois 62568  
(217) 287-7246  
Fax: (217) 532-3944  
Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

### Jersey County Extension

201 W. Exchange St., Ste A  
Jerseyville, Illinois 62052  
(618) 498-2913  
Fax: (618) 498-5913  
Tuesday & Wednesday, 8 AM - 4 PM  
Thursday, 8 AM - Noon

### Macoupin Extension

60 Carlinville Plaza  
Carlinville, Illinois 62626  
(217) 854-9604  
Fax: (217) 532-3944  
Monday - Thursday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

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## ONLINE



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Cover photo: A first grader from Beckemeyer Elementary School held a worm and learned about the importance of earth's soil during an Ag in the Classroom lesson.



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture by the Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and University of Illinois.