

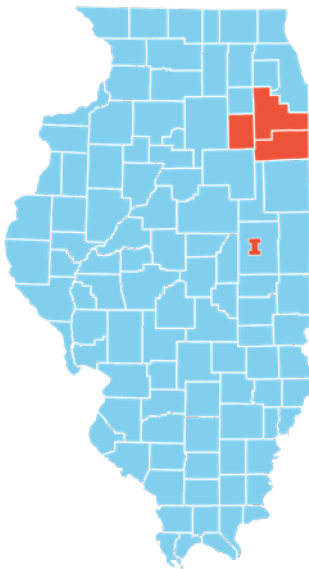


EXTENSION IN ACTION

Serving Grundy, Kankakee,
and Will Counties



Marilu Andon
County Director



Here with knowledge when you need us most.

In my more than 28 years with Illinois Extension, there is one thing that I never tire of: the impact we have on our communities.

Illinois Extension is on a mission to change lives. From answering gardening questions to providing youth with career exploration opportunities, the scope of our work is wide because the problems you face are wide – and that’s what we do.

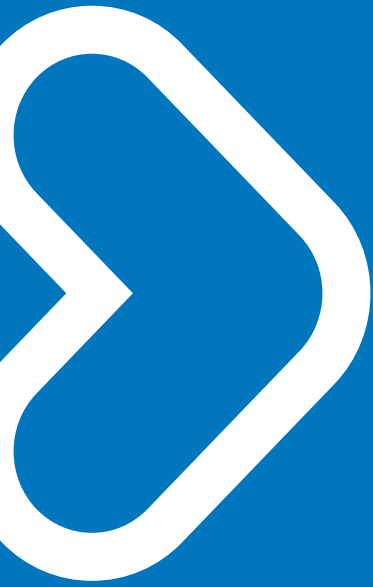
We provide answers you can trust, for all of life’s problems:

- We are here for you when you have questions as you work to keep the potted plant you got at your wedding alive.
- We are here when you want career advice to land that new job or promotion.
- We are here when you finally decide to say “yes” to your dream of opening an at-home catering business.
- We are here for you when you need help finding food or need greater access to healthy options.
- We are here for you as you try to figure out how best to discuss very real grown-up problems, like social injustice or a global pandemic, with your kids (and yes, we were here throughout that pandemic as you worked to juggle a job and schooling).

Sometimes, it’s easy to get caught up in the details. But whenever I step back to see the impact we’ve made, I get energized and encouraged.

In my first few months since becoming county director, I’ve seen success in the faces of the people I meet. I’m proud to present this annual report which showcases some of the great work we are accomplishing. I encourage you to stay engaged on our website and on social media as we continue to grow and serve our communities.

Marilu Andon
Extension 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



Handwritten thank you letter from an Illinois SNAP-Ed participant after attending a cooking workshop teaching youth about healthy meals and choices.

Dear Ms. Isabel

I love the pancakes it was

my favorite part of cooking

because i can make it for my

sister because it is her favorite

thing to eat.

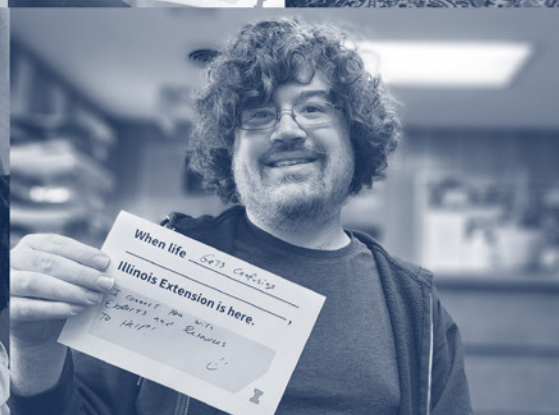
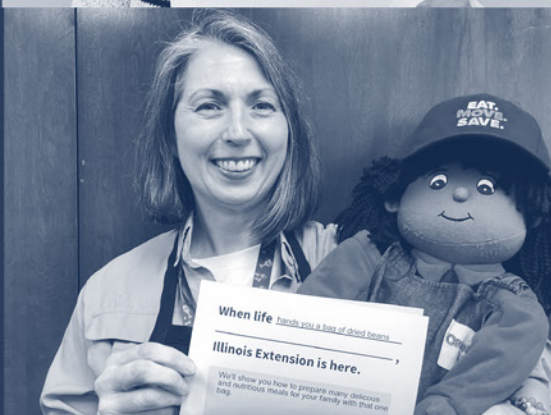
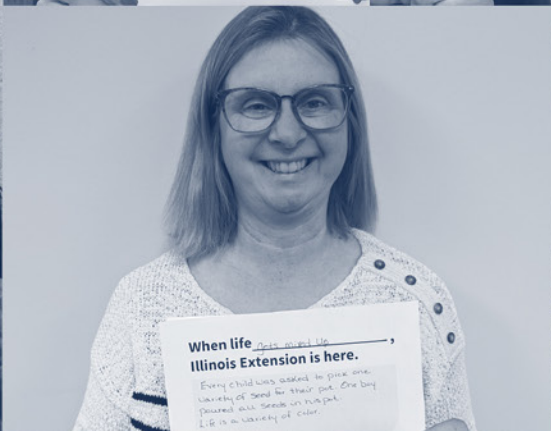
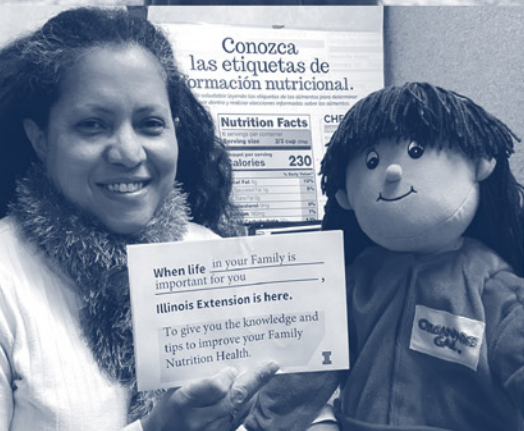
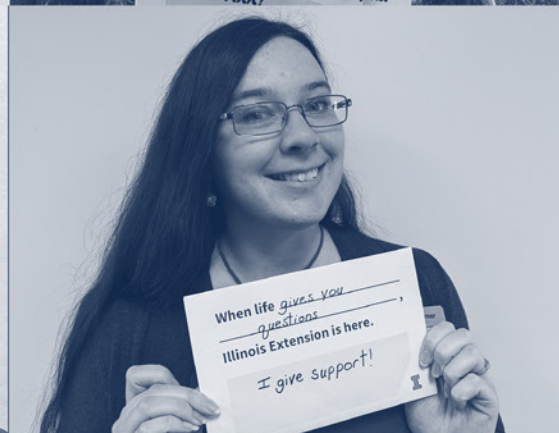
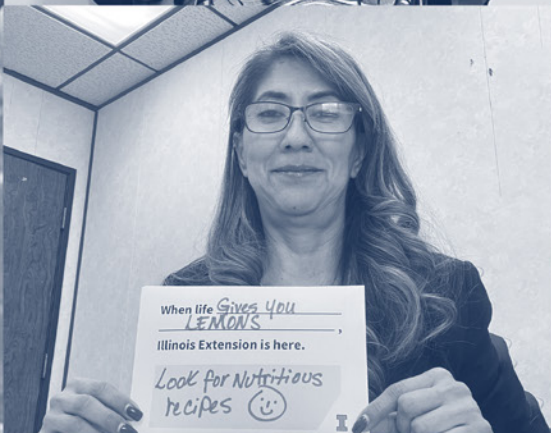
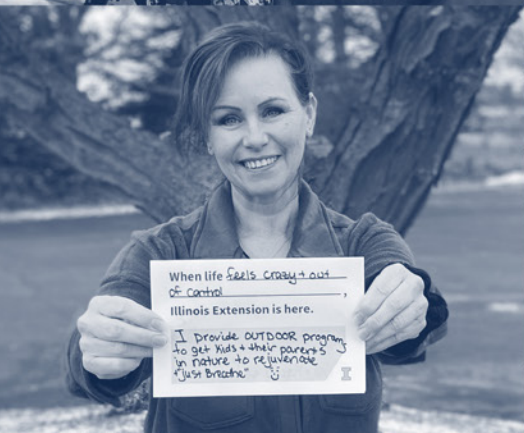
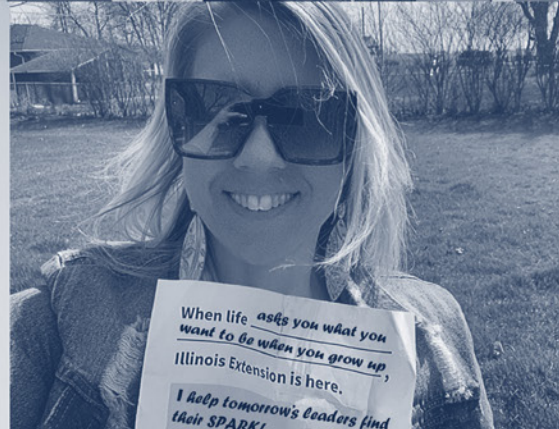
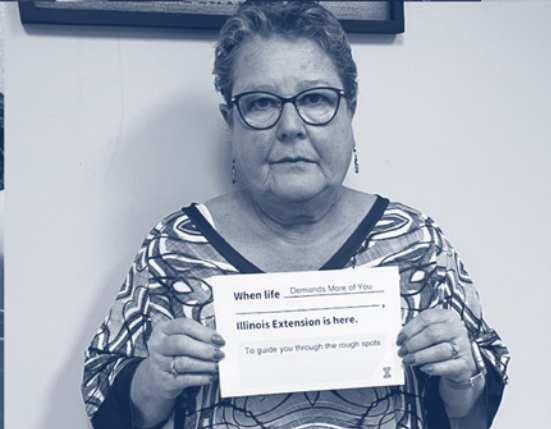
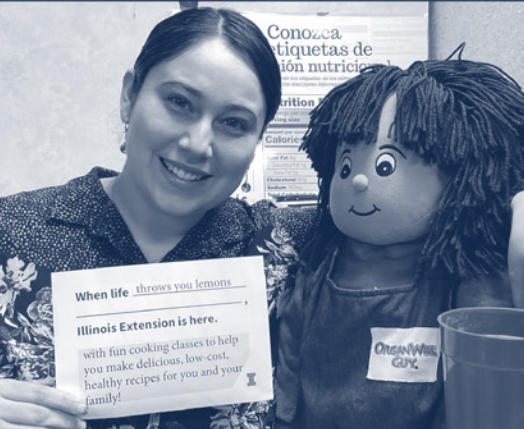
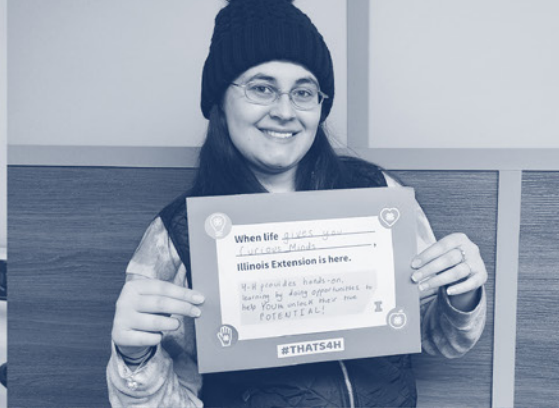
You are the best cooking teacher

i ever have and i hope you have

a great summer.



from: Maggie



ILLINOIS
EXTENSION



Illinois Extension

experts provide research-based knowledge for life's everyday problems.

Life has a tendency to throw you a curve-ball when you least expect it. Illinois Extension is here to help.

With offices and staff in Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties, our Extension unit provides local practical education you can trust to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future. Our staff work within the communities that they serve, working in conjunction with our statewide network of top-notch experts as we provide research-based resources and programming to the people of our communities.

While harnessing the power of the University of Illinois, we empower our communities to educate and create innovative solutions to impact the people we serve. We innovate, educate, and create impact.





Our work by the numbers

Financial Report

Locally, Illinois Extension provides programming to communities in Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties. Through our local, state, and federal funding streams, we provide exceptional programming through our team of knowledgeable educators and program staff.

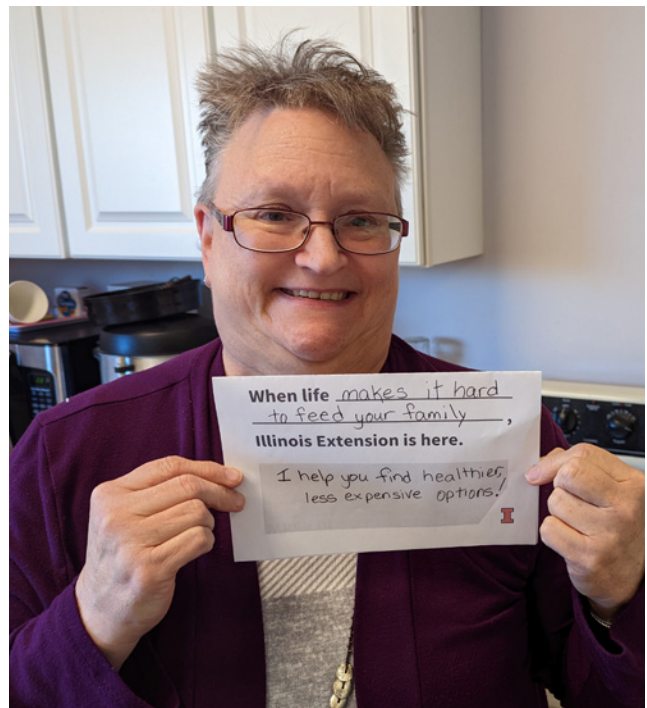
Federal funds include Illinois Nutrition Education Programs grant monies. Local funds include donations from 4-H Foundations, 4-H Federations, United Way of Grundy County, United Way of Will County, and program fees.



- 41% County
- 17% Federal
- 34% State
- 7% Local Sources
- 1% Reserves



- 41% Program and Education
- 33% Office and Operation
- 19% Administration
- 5% Other Costs



50,593
People reached by Extension programming¹



13,934
Volunteer hours in the community²



\$478,444
Value of volunteer time³

¹ Individuals participating in multiple program areas may be counted more than once. Also includes SNAP-Ed total estimated reach.

² Includes self-reported hours for Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Master Composters, and Money Mentors. 4-H volunteer hours are based on an average of 96 hours per volunteer.

³ Based on Independent Sector Value of Volunteer Time (Illinois-2021)



Measuring Extension’s Impact

Extension’s mix of federal, state, and local funds, mixed with volunteer time and in-kind donations, make it challenging to exactly calculate a return on investment. However, in an independent report in 2020, Extension’s robust breadth of work directly in the communities had economic and functional impacts of nearly 10x more than the Illinois Extension budget.



Read the report
go.illinois.edu/ExtensionImpact

Extension Council Advisory Group

The Extension Council is authorized by the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, in accordance with state law, to be actively involved in the operation of Illinois Extension. Extension councils cooperate with Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, evaluating, and financing an Extension program designed to meet the needs, interests, and resources of the local communities served.

Grundy County

Christine Frederick, Grundy County
 Sara Mitchell, Grundy County
 Randy Seggebruch, Grundy County
 Victoria Lundh, Grundy County

Kankakee County

Dale Bowman, Kankakee County
 Mark Hodak, Kankakee County
 Johari Kweli, Kankakee County
 John Tamblyn, Kankakee County
 Kim Yohnka, Kankakee County

Will County

Herb Brooks, Will County
 Lin Scharnhorst, Will County
 Sally Skoff, Will County
 Alex Tyle-Annen, Will County



Drawing about the 4-H fair from Madelyn S, a 4-H member.



4-H alum uses civic engagement skills, elected to county board seat

From *shadowing* government officials to *becoming* a government official, young 4-H alum puts civic engagement into practice as youngest board member.

Empowering youth to find their voice is an important part of the 4-H program, and for 19-year-old Nathanael Greene, a recent 4-H alum from Morris, that voice led him right to a seat at the table in county government.

Starting 4-H at the age of nine, Greene learned early the value of community and communication. Participating in service projects with his club and standing up to speak in front of his peers, Greene began to find his voice. He says that the community of peers and caring adults in 4-H helped him explore his interests and give him life skills that will last.

It's huge to be able to have an idea, formulate that idea, and then get that across to not only me but those around me and see some of those goals accomplished. 4-H gave me that ability and it made a world of difference in how I got to this place. I'm fully confident that it'll help me in the future, especially with this job on the board.
Nathanael Greene

With an interest in civic engagement and community service, Greene started taking advantage of opportunities to have his voice heard within the program. He participated in Grundy County Government Day where he shadowed county leaders, including the coroner and board members, to get a look into the inner working of local government.

Using the skills he learned in 4-H, such as communications and leadership, Greene further explored his passion for serving his community through the 4-H Legislative Connection Program, a program that brings young people to the Capital for a day of engagement with elected officials. This eventually turned into an internship during his final year of 4-H, and eventually a position with his state representative.

After graduating from 4-H and really thinking about the difference he could make in his community, he ran for county board, using those same skills. Now, he's a newly elected board member – one of the youngest in county history.



Greene (center) participated in 4-H Legislative Connection in Springfield when he was a 4-H member.

Greene is excited to give back to his community but this time on the side of a government official. Now, he can serve others – encouraging them to be their best self.

At the core of healthy, functioning communities is a sense of responsibility among community members to give back to their community. When youth advocate for issues that matter to them, or are encouraged to be involved in their communities, they see themselves as change-makers and part of the solution. For Nathanael, this meant a seat in local government and a future doing what he loves, giving back to the community.

I'm excited and I think it's going to be an incredible journey. Through 4-H, I met so many people and became so enriched as a person and now I get to serve with all the other board members serving a community I love.
Nathanael Greene



Nathanael Greene (right) speaks with a 4-H member while participating as a volunteer in a 4-H event.



Kids 'n Nature: 15 years, 2,500 youth impacted in longterm programming

There is growing evidence that time spent around plants and in green spaces has many benefits including improved health, better interpersonal relationships, and a higher quality of life. But there is an inequity that exists for many who live in urban areas. For youth living in metro areas, this often means limited access to natural resources and the outdoors.

Enter, Kids 'n Nature. Celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2022, the program has a goal of teaching kids to grow their own food, learn about nature first hand, and get physical exercise outdoors (screen free!). As students increase their knowledge of nature, they are also learning soft skills, like teamwork, leadership, and problem solving.



Youth participate in a Kids 'n Nature program in the forest at Pilcher Park of Joliet.

At the conclusion of the spring session, participants take home an entire garden of seedlings that they can plant for their families to provide fresh produce at home using the skills they learned in class.

Over the last 15 years, the program, has reached over 2,500 youth from six underserved schools, with 150 fourth grade students participating annually.

Focused on long-term, experiential learning, the program spans fall, spring, and summer. In summer, schools participate in two half-day per week summer camps which include the Federal Summer Lunch Program.

The program, which is a partnership between Extension experts, Extension volunteers, Joliet Grade School District #86, and the Joliet Park District, with program support generously provided by ExxonMobil, highlights the Extension method of local first.

As youth receive the ability to grow food and spend time outdoors, they learn important soft skills which last a lifetime, along with horticultural know-how that they can share with their family and with others.



Read more about Kids n Nature
go.illinois.edu/kids-n-nature



Curbing the winter blues and sharing practical skills with winter sowing

Spending time outside is very important for both physical health and mental wellbeing, but it can sometimes be a struggle to really enjoy the outdoors in the middle of winter. Illinois Extension worked to help curb the winter blues by sharing a tip to start planting seeds in the winter.

Participants around Kankakee County gathered for a fun workshop on winter sow. Needing only an empty milk jug, some dirt, and old fashioned elbow grease, planters were formed and seeds were sown.

You're going to get that gardening itch in about February when it's still too cold; this is going to help when you just can't get into the soil.

Holly Froning, Extension Program Coordinator

This low-cost method of starting seeds helps increase the growing season because seedlings are started sooner than had they been planted right in the ground. This process is also a great way to help curb the winter blues – introducing a bit of gardening into an otherwise cold time of year.

Whether large commercial agriculture operations, small farms, or community and backyard gardens, the future of our food

supply relies on use of practices that boost production and capacity. Growers at home often don't have access to the same tools and infrastructure that big farms do – like an expensive greenhouse. Winter Sowing in re-purposed milk jugs shows that all it takes is a little bit of ingenuity to see awesome results.



Participants work on winter sow planting. Empty plastic jugs are a great way to plant seeds in the winter.



Start your own winter sow project
go.illinois.edu/wintersow



Teaching civic engagement to middle school youth



Annual Government Day event brings local government and local students together for a day of civic learning and engagement with elected officials.

Thriving youth are the core of healthy, robust communities. For several years, Illinois Extension has held the annual Grundy County Government Day program in Morris which brought youth inside local government to help them thrive.

In this year's program, over 60 middle school students and over 30 government officials converged at the administration building, courthouse, and off-site to job shadow county officials and learn more about local government.

Participants for Government Day were chosen directly by government officials. Area school classrooms wrote essays answering the prompt "What government official would you like to job shadow and why." Over 490 essays were turned in from most Grundy County schools. From there, each government official read through and chose a limited number as winners who were then invited to Government Day.

After arriving for the day and following a brief word of welcome, participants went directly with participating county officials to learn more about their job and how they serve the community. These officials included the county coroner, sheriff, probation, health department, state's attorney, and others.

In 2022, participants also toured the fire department for another look inside the people that make a county and community function and stay safe.

Youth learned the importance of local government and how many jobs come together to help run the county. To bookend a great day of learning, officials and students received a tour of the Grundy County Jail and ate lunch at the Morris fire station before touring the Morris Fire and Ambulance District Station One with Chief Steffes and all the firefighters on duty at the station.

With Grundy being such a welcoming county, we are unique in our ability to offer this program due to our amazing relationship with the schools and county. Students who participate in this program are able to experience the fullness of county government and how they might be able to make a difference in their community in the future

Brooke Baker-Katcher, 4-H Program Coordinator

The global pandemic has reinforced the ongoing need for Illinois to develop innovative ways to nurture its workforce through career exploration, training and re-training programs, and other opportunities for refining skills of the current workforce and the workforce of the future. This great activity helps build civically active youth who will become changemakers in their community.



Government Day participants meet with a government official inside the Grundy County Court House to get checked in before the start of the event.



Outdoor education leads to thriving youth: Bringing Appalachian Trail to northern Illinois

Outdoor experiences are important for youth to stay healthy and learn more about the environment and world around them. At the center of this are shared experiences.

Exploring new experiences in a safe and support environment leads to a strong sense of community which brings people together to support each other in times of need and growth.

For youth in Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties, this new experience brought them right to the Appalachian Trail as they participated in a unique outdoor program called 4-H Hike the Appalachian Trail Outdoor Skills.

Though participants never really traveled outside their surrounding counties, they learned much about the Appalachian Trail while participating in hands-on outdoor experiences such as fire starting, navigation, and outdoor

My son has a renewed interest in everything outdoors, especially outdoor fire starting. He wants any reason to cook outdoors on the fire, now that he knows how to start a fire.

Julie W. (parent of a participant)

fitness. As youth learned more about the outdoors, they were able to use their skills to take hikes with their family, learn more about the outdoors, and teach others.

The program used youth-trained volunteers who gained valuable leadership skills. These volunteers, mixed with the long-term nature of the program, led to supportive spaces perfect for learning.

Accepting and celebrating differences creates an environment where all voices are important and heard. When strong networks of peers and organizations support youth and families, even the most vulnerable community members feel they belong and are valued.





A 4-H member works on planters during the 4-H Spring Break Program.

♥ Helping youth find their ‘spark’ during spring break

Building community and exploring different skills and talents is something that 4-H places at the forefront. During spring break, many families try to go on vacation, hangout as a family, or search for fun activities for the kids. Youth in Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties participated during the 4-H Spring Break program.

Youth participated in a variety of activities, from science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs to cultural exploration. As youth were introduced to different subjects in a safe and supportive environment, many found new interests.

When youth are allowed to explore their interests in a supportive environment, they find their “spark,” leading to youth that thrive at home and in the world.



“Find your spark” with Illinois 4-H
go.illinois.edu/spark-guide

Say “YES” to being healthy

We know you’ve heard lots of conflicting stories around vaccines in light of the recent pandemic. You may feel afraid. You may worry you aren’t being told the full truth. You may have doubts about the science. Here’s one thing you can be certain of: Illinois Extension will continue to give you the unbiased information on vaccine safety like we’ve been doing for more than 100 years. We’ve asked the hard questions on your behalf.



Staying healthy with vaccines
go.illinois.edu/vaccines

Healthy relationships lead to healthy families

Maintaining a strong relationship with your spouse or romantic partner can be a challenge. And when you need help, getting trustworthy, effective relationship support can be just as challenging. Relationship education can help you build the life you deserve.

The Illinois Strong Couples project – a collaborative effort between University of Illinois and Illinois Extension – is designed to provide you with free, proven online help for your relationship.



Learn more about the project
go.illinois.edu/strongcouples



Doug Tweeten, Master Naturalist volunteer, worked on bird feeders at SunnyHill Nursing home



Bringing nature to seniors in congregate housing



Prior to being presented with the global pandemic's new social, economic, and life challenges, mental and physical health was a growing concern. But for seniors in congregate housing, an often-overlooked population which grapples with limited resources, the challenges can be even greater. Research provides clues to combating these stressors; exposure and interaction with nature can have positive effects on both physical and mental wellbeing.

Seeing this need, a program focused on bringing the awe of the outdoors to seniors in a more accessible format was brought right to a local community: Sunny Hill Nursing Home.

Located in Joliet, Sunny Hill Nursing Home is a congregate housing facility owned by Will County. Focusing on resident-centered care, the facility has over 150 beds and a newly renovated facility. Volunteers with Illinois Extension's Master Naturalist and Master Gardener programs worked to bring native birds to the facility using bird feeders.

Easily viewable bird feeders, many attached right to the glass of residents' rooms, were positioned throughout the nursing home. With feeders now viewable inside and out, the positive effects of the outdoors was provided in an equitable and accessible way to residents who couldn't access it before.

Since nature-based engagement entered the facility, the entire resident population has gained increased interest and interaction with nature, learning more about local wildlife and seeing interactions first-hand.

This cooperative project with the Will County Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists has positively affected our Sunny Hill Nursing Home of Will County by providing them with many more opportunities to engage with nature which enhances their lives many times each day. The residents have bird feeders attached to the outside of their rooms to view outside of their windows. These bird feeders are filled by the volunteers so our residents can enjoy bird viewing and volunteer workings all year long. Danette Krieger, Director of Life Engagement Sunnyhill Nursing Home

Personal health decisions are not made in a vacuum. There is growing evidence that time spent around nature has many benefits including improved health, better interpersonal relationships, and a higher quality of life. Sunny Hill was just one example of how Illinois Extension is moving the needle to create environments where healthy choices are not only possible but are also encouraged and freely available to everyone.



Addressing food insecurity, one program at a time

Research shows a strong link between food insecurity, poor health, and poor academic outcomes for children. Food insecurity is not just about hunger. It's about not having access to food options that meet nutritional needs, which is particularly important for individuals and families with limited resources. Extension's network of volunteers and partners work together to address food insecurity in locally relevant ways.



Making a difference through container gardening and healthy eating

For many, finding healthy food options when on a budget can be challenging. Compounded with limited access to grocery stores and farmers markets, food insecurity is a real problem.

For Carlene, an avid gardener who now lives in senior housing apartments, food insecurity looked like not having the ability to plant a garden outside - her new outside patio was rife with wildlife which made growing anything difficult.

After attending Healthy Cents, a SNAP-Ed program focusing on eating healthy while on a budget, she learned about different methods for low cost, indoor gardening. Now, she can garden indoors, providing fresh food, reducing the grocery bill, and helping her stay happy and healthy doing something she loves.

Drinking Smart: After-school nutrition program teaches kids about sugary drinks

Head to the juice aisle in the grocery store, and you'll be bombarded with advertising aimed at children. When you look at the nutrition label, the juices aren't the healthiest.

Partnering with the Will County YMCA and District 86, youth in grades kindergarten through second grade learned how to choose healthier beverages. From sports drinks to coffee, water to 100% juice, caffeine and added sugar are all things to think about. Participants learned a lot and many commented that they created a game with their families as they taught them what they learned and how to choose healthy beverages.



A young participant make pancakes (with the help of her parents!)

Budget-friendly changes for a healthier plate: Good enough to share

It's hard to make healthy choices when fresh, healthy food is often more expensive than other less-healthy alternates. One major goal of SNAP-Ed is to provide the education and know how to help people live their best life by making budget friendly changes to thrive.

Partnering with the YWCA in Kankakee County, preschool parents and YWCA staff learned about healthy eating. During the classes, participants were given all of the groceries needed to complete a recipe each week. Ms. Valerie, a participant in the Healthy Cents class, was inspired to share what she learned by using her groceries to make a recipe for her coworkers to taste and enjoy. As participants learn more and share what they are learning with friends and family, the impact of our work expands.

EAT.MOVE.SAVE.

Making Healthier Choices on a Budget



Need food? Use the Find Food IL Community Food Map

Use the Find Food IL map to find places in your community offering free food or meals. You can also find stores and markets that accept SNAP/LINK or WIC coupons, farmers markets, and more. Plus, see the DHS or WIC office nearest to you.



Find Food IL Community Food Map
go.illinois.edu/findfood

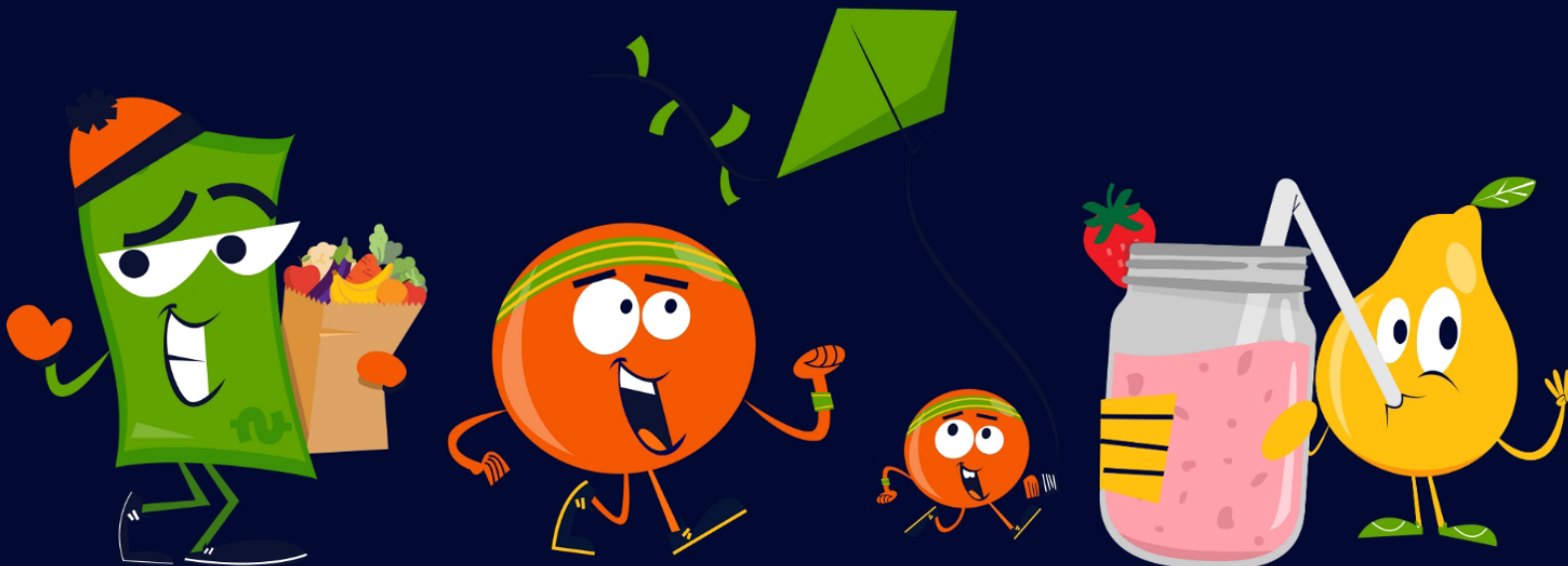


Learn more about Eat.Move.Save.

Eat. Move. Save. is here to help you make healthier choices on any budget. Learn more about building a healthy lifestyle for you and your family. The Eat. Move. Save. website brings expert resources to the forefront to help you live your best life!



Find Food IL Community Food Map
eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu





Stay Connected!

IT'S TIME TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE:

Whether it's advice to get rid of the bugs that won't leave your tomatoes alone, or fact sheets to give you the confidence you need to start your own home business, Extension is here with research based information to help you live your best life.



Browse the topics we address
extension.illinois.edu/global/topics



Listen in to the Extension Neighborhood Podcast

Whether you are facing challenges or just want to be in the company of great neighbors on your morning commute, Extension is here with some words of wisdom or a funny story. Join Illinois Extension as we talk about life's problems, elevate changemakers in the community, talk to experts in their field, and help YOU live your best life.

In a new podcast, Illinois Extension brings knowledge you can trust, right to your speakers! Listen online, on social media, or wherever you get your podcasts.



Sign up for updates and be the first to listen in go.illinois.edu/Extension-Neighborhood

Stay up to date on upcoming events and news

Join our mailing list to receive information about local programs, advice from university experts in topics that matter to you, and so much more. We send updates when you want them and only when you think they are useful to you! And, if you ever stop getting value from our emails, easily update your preferences or unsubscribe at anytime.



Sign up for updates go.illinois.edu/gkw-newsletter

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For office hours, please visit us online at extension.illinois.edu/gkw

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Cover photo: Chief Deputy Coroner Christina Hintze-Symoniak, D-ABMDI of Grundy, teaches youth about crime scene investigation during 4-H Mystery Camp held annually in the summer.



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).

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.