

Illinois 4-H



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CLOVERSEED 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Illinois 4-H
FOUNDATION



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Hands-on Experiences. Really confident kids.



Photo courtesy of Sophia Schneider

On Air for 4-H

4-H youth are going Beyond Ready by stepping up to the mic and sharing their voices with the community. Through media interviews, they're building confidence, sharpening communication skills, and showcasing the impact of 4-H across Illinois.

#ThisIs4H

University of Illinois Extension is housed within the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Dr. Matthew Vann, Director of University of Illinois Extension. Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

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Writers: Carissa Nelson and Sophia
Schneider, unless otherwise indicated

Beyond Ready Means Preparing Youth for What's Next



4-H is where young people develop the skills and confidence to lead and grow.

Every experience—whether mastering a project, mentoring a peer, or serving their community—helps

prepare them for what comes next. In 4-H, youth build lifelong relationships, expand their networks, and gain the leadership and teamwork skills that set them apart.

Today, we celebrate an incredible group of young people who are making a difference—growing gardens, fighting food insecurity, promoting healthy lifestyles, driving innovation, and supporting those in need. They are not just ready for the future; they are Beyond Ready.

I want to personally thank our donors, whose generosity fuels these opportunities. Your support empowers youth, strengthens communities, and ensures that 4-H continues to prepare the next generation of changemakers.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Carey
Illinois 4-H Assistant Dean
and 4-H Director

Beyond Ready Means Investing in the Future of 4-H



4-H is where young people discover their passions, develop lifelong skills, and build the confidence to lead. It's a place where every youth belongs and is

encouraged to dream big. Through hands-on learning and mentorship, 4-H members form lasting connections, expand their networks, and gain experiences that prepare them to be Beyond Ready for whatever comes next.

Today, we celebrate the remarkable young people who are using their time and talents to strengthen their communities—growing gardens, fighting food insecurity, promoting healthy living, driving innovation, and offering compassion to those in need. They are not just shaping their own futures; they are shaping a better world.

To our donors, whose generosity makes this possible, thank you. Your support fuels opportunities that empower youth, grow communities, and ensure that 4-H continues to inspire the next generation of leaders and changemakers.

Warm regards,

Angie Barnard
4-H Foundation Executive Director



Help create more opportunities for Illinois youth

The Illinois 4-H Foundation Board of Directors is always looking for passionate and enthusiastic individuals to help build relationships to generate financial resources for Illinois 4-H.

WITH YOUR HELP – WE CAN DO MORE!

If you are interested in serving, please scan the code below or head to go.illinois.edu/4HBoard to fill out the interest form.



Illinois 4-H Foundation Board of Directors

Illinois 4-H Foundation Board members share a common belief in the life-changing impact of 4-H. Through their leadership, they build connections and resources that empower our program statewide. We extend our heartfelt thanks for their dedication, advocacy, and support.

Brian Deverman - Chair, Missouri
Kurt Hansen– VP Communications, Cook County

Anne Hathaway, Indiana

Keith Jacobs, DeWitt County

Krystal Jungmann, Warren County

Jana Lithgow– VP Board Development, Ohio

Kyle McMillan– Vice Chair, Bureau County

Brian Moeller, Colorado

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Louise Rogers, Champaign County

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Kristi Stout, Pulaski County

Ex-Officio

Dr. Kevin Carey

Maggie Wave

Tina Veal

Dr. Matthew

Vann

Lila Jeanne Eichelberger, Emeritus

4-H Grows Confidence, Leadership, and Communication

123 Responses from members in **50 counties** | **Youth ages** 11 to 19+
Average years in 4-H (including Cloverbuds): 7.9 years

Participation

75%

of respondents spend an hour or more on 4-H per week

73%

of respondents are a member of a county leadership group

90%

of respondents have been a 4-H club officer

Impacts

95%

of respondents said their 4-H leadership experiences have helped them feel ready for the workplace.

91%

of respondents said that participating in 4-H leadership experiences made them want to seek out additional ways to improve their leadership abilities.

90%

of respondents said that participating in 4-H leadership experiences made them want to be more engaged in making change in their community.

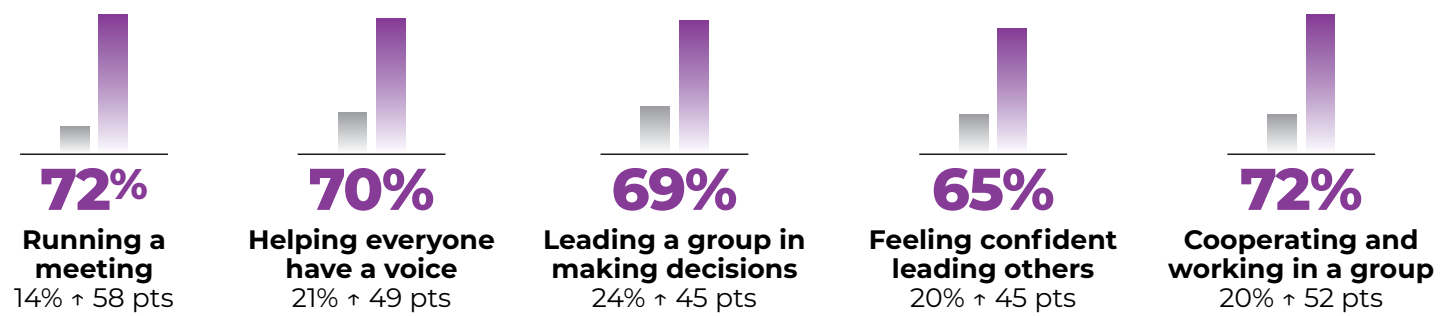
74%

of respondents said a 4-H leader or staff member provided them with ongoing guidance and support



Skill or Trait Before 4-H/After 4-H Change

Top Growth Areas (Strongly Agree Responses)



*This data came from our State Youth Leadership Survey

Club Members
20,200+

Overall Experiences
309,300+

Program Participants
125,900+

Program Partner Sites
1,500+

Club Retention
73%



In 4-H, we believe...

all youth, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, faith, orientation, interests, or abilities deserve a place where they can thrive and achieve a better future. Illinois 4-H is committed to eliminating any instance of discrimination or inequity within our program to support opportunity for all youth.

In 2024-2025, donors just like you helped youth gain confidence, leadership, and new connections!

FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS



\$925,137

Total dollars given to the
Illinois 4-H Foundation
7/1/24 - 6/30/25



2,271
donors



93

endowments
valued over

\$18.1M

with an annual
interest of

\$356,346



4-H for our Future Fund

While every gift makes an impact, placing your trust in us to allow funds to go where the need is greatest helps 4-H do more.

This type of gift designation allows flexibility and the ability to quickly provide
what youth need, when they need it.

How 4-H shaped a lifetime of service for Bea Bagby



For **Beatrice H. Bagby**, known to most as Bea, 4-H wasn't just a club. It was a lifeline. A spark. A community. And ultimately, a calling.

And in the midst of rebuilding a new family rhythm, she found something unexpected: 4-H.

"At some point in 1947, I found 4-H — though I don't remember how," Bea said.

It was the beginning of a seven-year 4-H journey in Mrs. Paul Hentges' 4-H Club in Macomb that would shape the course of Bea's life.

Finding Purpose Among the Pines at 4-H Memorial Camp

In 1951, Bea attended the second Illinois State 4-H Junior Leadership Conference at 4-H Memorial Camp in Monticello. That week made a lasting impression — from the leadership lessons to the quiet dignity of the evensong ceremony, held at dusk from inside the Allerton House.

Over the years, Bea returned to Memorial Camp many times — as a 4-H member, Extension employee, mentor, conference organizer, and donor.

Among many memorable 4-H Memorial Camp mainstays, one person — Richard Lyon — stands apart for Bea: "He, as State 4-H Leader, called in 1970, offering me the opportunity to interview to become a member of the state 4-H staff."

Bea joined the State 4-H Staff that fall.

Now, she had the opportunity to design Illinois 4-H

Junior Leaders' Conferences for a new generation of 4-H'ers.

Alongside her colleague Walt Griffith, Bea introduced a powerful new idea: inviting underserved guest groups — including senior citizens, children from urban areas, and adults with developmental disabilities — for a shared day of camp with the junior leaders.

One newspaper editorial from the time called it "a two-way change of image." Bea called it leadership learning that makes a difference.

By 1989, Bea was employed as an Extension specialist, Adult Life and Aging, when she accepted an interim, part-time assignment as a regional director that included management tasks with 4-H Memorial Camp.

Bea continues to give back to 4-H Memorial Camp through her annual financial support. This year, she has made a generous \$50,000 gift to celebrate the Camp's 75th anniversary—and to invest in the next 75 years of outdoor learning, leadership development, and lifelong memories for Illinois youth.

Meet Ojas!

McLean County youth, Ojas Shah was named a 2025 Youth in Action Award finalist! This extraordinary 4-H'er is not just making an impact today—he's Beyond Ready to lead the way as a leader of tomorrow.

With resilience, passion, and a commitment to creating real change in his community, Ojas is working to shape a brighter future for all of us.



Competing in over 15 projects each year, Ojas has explored the vast opportunities 4-H offers, from STEM to Healthy Living, Community Service, and Leadership. One significant skill 4-H has given him is public speaking. Stepping onto the McLean County 4-H Fair stage for the first time, he was nervous, but with each speech, he grew more confident. By high school, he became a state-level speaker and joined his school's Speech Team, eventually becoming the captain and an IHSA Speech State Finalist.

Advocating for mental health through his speeches on the impacts of social media inspired Ojas to pursue healthy living advocacy further. As the Illinois Healthy Living Ambassadors President and Illinois Youth Leadership Team Member, Ojas planned a yoga retreat, organized state-wide food drives, and taught meditation techniques. He even conducted a healthy living workshop in India, demonstrating a nutrient-tracking Python app he built. His passion for teaching led him to co-found his high school's CS club, "Bit-by-Bit," which now reaches 300 kids weekly across seven schools. Looking ahead, he aims to expand CS education and advocate for more funding for CS opportunities in Illinois middle and high schools.

Spotlight on Ignite 2025 Brand Ambassador: Paris Van Dyke



Paris Van Dyke of Clay County was chosen as one of two Ignite 2025 Brand Ambassadors following a national search.

A distinguished author, podcaster, and passionate advocate for agriculture, Paris had long showcased her expertise behind the microphone and on stage. For Ignite 2025, she took on a new role in front of the camera, delivering key event updates and ensuring attendees remained informed throughout the experience.



Illinois 4-H youth are **HEALTHY**

We are dedicated to empowering youth in both body and mind. We rely on scientifically backed studies and programming that drive youth forward so they can be prepared for anything.



Photo and story credit: Amanie Abusaid

Cooking Up Skills for the Future

High school students from Gordon Bush Alternative Center in St. Clair County put their culinary talents to the test in a high-energy 4-H Cooking Challenge. Five teams worked together to create delicious, nutritious dishes using all five MyPlate food groups—dairy, grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein. With creativity, teamwork, and a passion for cooking, they proved they're Beyond Ready to take on new challenges in and out of the kitchen.

Judges evaluated each dish on presentation, taste, and nutritional balance, but the real wins were the skills gained. Students sharpened their knife techniques, mastered proper food handling, and learned how to safely cook steak—all while deepening their understanding of nutrition. One excited participant even asked, "Can we do this again?"

This program was made possible through the generosity of

ILLINOIS
BEEF
Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers

Illinois 4-H youth are Beyond Ready!

Beyond Ready is a National 4-H initiative aiming to prepare 10 million young people with critical life skills and workforce readiness and Illinois 4-H is excited to take part!

4-H is equipping young people with essential skills such as leadership, critical thinking, and adaptability.

And encouraging positive youth development by focusing on health, engagement, productivity, and community involvement.

Illinois 4-H extends heartfelt thanks to **GROWMARK** and **Compeer Financial** for their lead investments in the Beyond Ready initiative — advancing the important work of preparing youth across Illinois feel empowered and to thrive.



GROWMARK



Building Skills for a Productive Future

Through hands-on experiences and mentorship, Illinois 4-H youth are developing the technical skills and leadership needed to succeed in the livestock industry. At the Junior Livestock Conference, attendees gained real-world experience in essential areas like animal care, marketing, and product quality—skills that will serve them well in future careers and communities.

This conference focuses on:

- Technical animal-science knowledge and production skills.
- Critical thinking, decision-making, and industry evaluation skills.
- Communication and the ability to defend decisions verbally.
- Responsibility, work ethic and life skills (planning, time management, animal care).

Illinois 4-H youth are **PRODUCTIVE**

We offer opportunities and experiences that shape youth into their full, authentic selves, enabling them to shine both now and in the future.



Photo credit: Johnna Jennings

By working alongside teen leaders and industry experts, these young participants are becoming Beyond Ready to take on meaningful roles in agriculture and beyond.

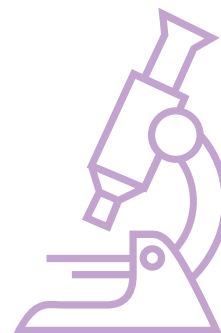
This program
was made
possible by



FARM CREDIT
ILLINOIS



Illinois Pork Producers.
Generations of Commitment.



Illinois 4-H youth are **ENGAGED**

Illinois 4-H believes in the potential of all youth to strive and let their talents flourish.



Tanner Fuller, Crawford County Photo credit: Megan Jones

Beyond Ready means

Preparing youth not just for today but for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

97%
of youth surveyed on
4-H leadership feel
their 4-H leadership
experiences have
helped them feel
ready for adulthood



Illinois 4-H youth are **BEYOND READY** FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES OF TODAY AND TOMORROW!



4-H programming has a positive impact on young people:

- 4-H'ers are **40% more likely** than other youth to pursue a college degree
- **2X more likely** to obtain vocational or technical training
- **2X more likely** to serve in the military
- 4-H'ers **feel more confident** in reaching important life goals like owning a home and being debt-free and starting a business
- **2X more likely** to have the goal of being a leader





Photo credit: Shelby Carlson

Shaping the future of livestock

The next generation of livestock leaders gained hands-on experience in the livestock field at the Illinois 4-H Junior Livestock Conference!

This event was made possible by



*Illinois Pork Producers.
Generations of Commitment.*



Attendees at the Junior Livestock Conference included 100 youth from 50 counties across Illinois, with youth members of the 4-H Livestock Ambassador Team helping to plan and execute this learning experience aimed at 7th, 8th, and 9th graders.

“Seeing young people connect with the livestock industry through hands-on learning is incredibly rewarding,” says Dan Jennings, University of Illinois Extension 4-H youth development educator. “This conference gives them the opportunity to explore areas of livestock production they may not have been exposed to before, helping them develop essential skills and broaden their horizons.”

Teen leaders from the Livestock Ambassador Team were excited to share their knowledge and skills with the youth that will follow in their footsteps as they shape their own paths in the livestock industry.

“This program is about more than education,” says Jennings. “It’s about building confidence, fostering teamwork, and creating a network of peers and mentors who share a passion for livestock. These youth are building skills they’ll carry into their future careers and communities.”

Attendees participated in “Glove-Up Sessions” throughout the conference which allowed them to work hands-on in a variety of skills, such as giving injections, wound suturing, product quality, marketing, and more.

The event focused on education, but also created great opportunities to build camaraderie and a sense of teamwork around a shared passion for the livestock industry.

**Your gift
helps 4-H
do more!**

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- 4-H for Our Future Fund
- 4-H Animal Science Fund



My Last 4-H Dog Show

by Molly Ziegler, Ogle County



As I stood in the ring for my final 4-H dog show, a wave of emotions hit me—pride, nostalgia, gratitude, and a little bit of sadness. This chapter of my life, filled with so many unforgettable moments, is coming to a close, and it's hard to put into words just how much it's meant to me.

As the day went on and I was showing Dakota and Indigo, I couldn't help but reflect on how far this journey has taken me: 11 years of showing dogs in 4-H, countless hours of training, blood, sweat, and tears—and I still wouldn't have it any other way. It all started with Lucy, the dog that sparked my passion and got me into the ring for the very first time.

Since then, I've had the honor of showing Morgan, Dakota, Gus Gus, and now Indigo—who just so happens to be Dakota's puppy. Watching things come full circle this year, with Indigo following in her mom's pawprints, was something truly special. It felt like the perfect way to end this journey—celebrating both where I started and how far we've come. My dogs and I have all had over a year off with very little preparation for today and I'm sure they felt as rusty as I did, but man did I have fun today!

4-H has taught me more than how to train and show a dog. It's taught me patience, responsibility, perseverance, and most importantly, how to lead with kindness. The bond I've built with my dogs is something I'll always treasure—but so is the bond I've built with the amazing people in this community: my fellow members, the volunteers, the judges, and especially the younger kids just starting their journeys.

Watching those younger members grow and improve has been one of the greatest joys of my time in 4-H. I'll miss the laughter, the high-fives after a good run, the pep talks before showtime, and even the nervous excitement that always filled the air on show day.

To the kiddos just getting started: I hope you love this experience as much as I did. Pour your heart into it, because it will give you back so much more. Cherish the early mornings, the messy training sessions, the ribbons—both the wins and the lessons—and every single tail wag. This program can shape you in ways you don't even realize yet.

Though I'm sad to say goodbye to this chapter, I'm also excited to see what comes next. Thank you to everyone who has made this experience one to remember, especially my parents!



A ride to victory!

The Illinois 4-H Hippology team triumphed at the Eastern National 4-H Roundup Contest in Louisville, KY, securing multiple top honors. The team—Talisa Thomas of Whiteside County, Ellis Rogers of Knox County, Hannah Wenzel of Saline County, Allison Burrs of Carroll County, and coaches Olivia Charles and Bryan Hollewell—showcased exceptional teamwork and skill.

The team earned the title of Champion in the overall competition, written phase, and stations phase, with a strong 6th place finish in the problems phase. Individual accolades included Allison Burrs taking home High Individual in the written phase, stations phase, and overall; Ellis Rogers placing 6th in stations and tying for 5th overall; and Hannah Wenzel finishing 9th in the written phase, 7th in stations, and 9th overall.

The Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup encourages youth to develop teamwork, self-confidence, and leadership skills, all while aligning with 4-H's mission to inspire youth in Science, Engineering, Technology, Mathematics, Healthy Living, and Citizenship.

Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders in Meat Science

The Illinois 4-H Meat Judging Series is a collaborative event between the University of Illinois Meats Judging Team and the Illinois Association of Meat Processors. Open to 4-H and FFA youth, the series helps participants build real-world meat evaluation skills through hands-on industry experiences.

Through this partnership, youth gain unique opportunities to:

- Learn directly from collegiate coaches and industry professionals
- Practice grading, identification, and judging on real carcasses and retail cuts
- Explore careers in meat science, food safety, agriculture, and processing
- Tour processing facilities and see behind-the-scenes operations

This high-quality, practical learning environment gives youth skills they can use in future competitions, classrooms, and careers in the agricultural industry.

Photo credit: Lily Nestler, 4-H Influencer





Illinois 4-H'er Excels on the National Stage in Poultry Judging

Illinois 4-H'er Grady Shaffer of Adams County placed 7th in the nation in past production hens at the National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference held in Louisville, KY in November!

Skills tested during the Poultry Judging competition include orderly decision-making, using reasoning skills, communicating decisions, poultry dish preparation, food safety, and subject matter knowledge of species of poultry, food safety, physiology, nutrition, and eggs.

Financial support was provided by the Department of Animal Sciences, the State 4-H Office, and the Illinois 4-H Foundation.



Photo credit: Katie Abell

Teamwork in the fast lane

The Northwest Regional 4-H Horse Bowl Senior team showcased their equine knowledge and teamwork in a fast-paced quiz-style competition. Between questions, they shared smiles and camaraderie!

Camping & Outdoor Living



Scan the code to
watch video coverage
of 4-H Memorial Camp
or head to [go.illinois.
edu/4-HCampVideo](https://go.illinois.edu/4-HCampVideo)

75 YEARS of making memories

In July 2025, 4-H Memorial Camp celebrated 75 years of connection, traditions, and adventure. Generations of campers, staff, and friends came together to honor the camp's legacy since 1949 and look ahead to the next 75 years of memories yet to be made.



For over 75 years, the Dining Hall, Iwig Lodge, and other camp spaces have been the heart of 4-H Memorial Camp. Now, we're looking ahead to preserve their legacy while making updates that make camp more welcoming, accessible, and functional year-round.

Plans include an all-season Dining Hall with panoramic views, an updated Iwig Lodge with modern gathering spaces and a lakeside patio, and refreshed bathroom facilities that ensure comfort, safety, and privacy for all campers.

These improvements honor our history while investing in the future of 4-H Memorial Camp. You can help make it happen and your support today ensures generations to come will continue to learn, grow, and lead at this special place.



Your gift helps 4-H do more!

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- 4-H Environment Fund
- 4-H for Our Future Fund
- 4-H Memorial Camp

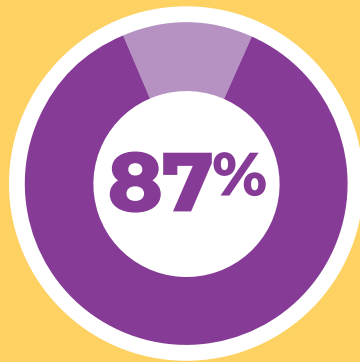


Civic Engagement



Jerry Costello II, Director of Illinois Department of Agriculture speaking with IL 4-H'ers.

Photo credit: Cayti Costello



of participants felt inspired to be more involved in their community.

From shaking hands with lawmakers to sharing what 4-H means to them, Illinois 4-H members made their voices heard at Legislative Connection! This was a powerful day of civic engagement, leadership, and representing youth across the state.

Youth Lead the way in D.C.

Firsthand Account

“ Illinois delegate Julia Gergen (second from the left) of DuPage county shared her experience: At National 4-H Conference, one of our main goals was to provide a youth perspective to government agencies about various topics. 4-H members were divided across various Roundtables of groups that had specific topics to address with a specific agency. These Roundtable groups included topics like healthy eating among youth, promoting 4-H youth mental health, supporting national parks, and many more. We spent several days meeting with these roundtables to develop and practice presentations which we ultimately delivered to our respective agencies.

I was a member of the Promoting Healthy Eating Among Youth roundtable, and I was very proud of the teamwork and creativity that went into our presentation. I learned a lot from hearing perspectives of other youth and doing further research on the topic. Beyond just the time spent in roundtables, we also had the opportunity to tour Washington DC, attend a career fair, and connect with 4-H members from across the country.

Overall, Conference was a great opportunity to learn and collaborate with other 4-H members to share our perspectives and foster positive change.”



Gifts that pay you back

A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is an easy, popular option that allows you to transfer cash, or appreciated, marketable securities to the University of Illinois Foundation (UIF), and, in exchange, you or up to two people you choose receive a fixed annual payment for life. When the CGA ends, the remaining funds are used to support Illinois 4-H foundation. CGA donors also receive an immediate income tax deduction (if they itemize), subject to applicable limitations, and, in most cases, a portion of their payments are tax-free. CGAs also offer an opportunity to diversify your portfolio and, should you decide to use appreciated securities to fund your annuity, you bypass capital gains tax. CGAs are not available in a small number of states.

You can also transfer assets to UIF to establish a charitable remainder trust (CRT) which then makes payments to you or others for life, for a term that does not exceed 20 years, or a combination of the two. A CRT can also diversify your portfolio and, when terminated, its remaining assets will be used to support Illinois 4-H Foundation. If you would like to learn more, please contact **Angie Barnard** at abarnard@illinois.edu or **217-333-9295**.



Photo credit: Julie Roth

Sharing the Power of 4-H Service

As part of a local Community Volunteer Event, 4-H members from Cook County's Urban Adventurers spoke to more than 800 students about 4-H and the power of service learning projects.





Cultivating Civic Leadership: 4-H at Illinois Agriculture Legislative Day

At this year's Illinois Agriculture Legislative Day, our 4-H Youth Leadership Team was front and center. With nearly 50 agricultural organizations gathered to meet with lawmakers and highlight the significance of Illinois agriculture, 4-H youth had a seat at the table.

Youth Leadership Team President Janella Neary of Monroe County delivered remarks on behalf of Illinois 4-H, showcasing the confidence, communication, and leadership skills built through 4-H. Our youth presence at Ag Day demonstrates how 4-H youth are not only engaged in today's conversations —

they're shaping tomorrow's solutions.

“We pledge our hands to larger service”

As part of our True Leaders in Service Event, our members reported on events that involved 1,740 4-H members, 540 volunteers, 1108 hours of service, and an estimated 1,035,372 lives impacted!





Scan the code to watch video coverage of our 2025 State Public Speaking Contest and examples of speeches performed or head to go.illinois.edu/PublicSpeakingVideos

Photo credit: Lindsay Adams Pictured: Hallee Whitlock from Saline County 4-H

Equipping Youth with Skills for a Lifetime of Success

The 4-H Public Speaking program provides young people with the opportunity to build confidence, express their ideas effectively, and master public speaking—an essential skill for leadership and career success.

Participants gain hands-on experience in four contest categories: Formal Speech, Illustrated Speech, Original Works, and Oral Interpretation. These experiences strengthen their ability to organize thoughts, communicate clearly, and present with confidence—preparing them for future academic and professional success.

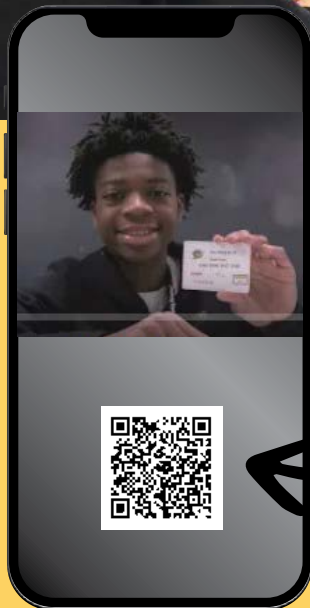




Your gift helps 4-H do more!

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- Illinois 4-H College and Career Readiness Fund
- 4-H Youth Leadership Fund



Scan the code to watch video coverage of a WTTRW program in action or head to go.illinois.edu/WTTRWVideo

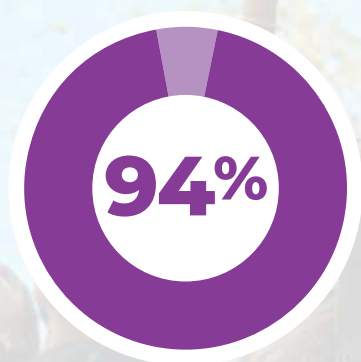
Welcome to the Real World!

Welcome to the Real World is a signature 4-H program that brings financial literacy and career readiness to life. Through a hands-on simulation, youth explore careers, manage budgets, and make everyday decisions about spending, saving, and lifestyle choices.

Led by 4-H staff, educators, and community volunteers, the program continues to reach youth across Illinois-helping them build confidence, practice smart money habits, and prepare for life beyond the classroom.

Helping 4-H Youth Navigate College Financial Aid as they plan their futures

Understanding financial aid is a key step in preparing for college, and Illinois 4-H is here to help. In partnership with the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the 4-H College and Career Readiness Specialist hosted a virtual session to guide students and families through the financial aid process. Participants gained insights into FAFSA, the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, and available state and federal aid programs. By equipping youth with the knowledge to make informed financial decisions, Illinois 4-H is ensuring they are beyond ready for their next steps in education and career planning.



94% agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with this workshop and that the information was helpful and easy to understand.

Turning Acres into Impact

Gifts of Farmland

A charitable gift of farmland plays a critical role in planning for your family's financial future and opens doors to new opportunities. Whether you intend for the University of Illinois Foundation to maintain the farm or reinvest the proceeds from its sale, you can help advance transformational 4-H programming for decades to come.

Your farm may have been in your family for generations, with a special place in your heart for the memories it holds and the values it represents. Yet, when you think about the farm's future, you may find yourself in one or more of these positions:

- Your family isn't interested in operating the farm.
- You'd like to provide lifetime income for yourself and another family member.
- You need consistent income your farm may not deliver.
- Managing the farm—now or in the future—is more responsibility than you care to accept.
- You want peace of mind about how the farm will be managed in the future.
- You may need to reconsider potential income or estate tax savings that could come from a properly structured charitable gift of farmland.

Ways to Give Real Estate & Farmland

You can give farmland and real estate to the University of Illinois Foundation to benefit 4-H in the following ways:

- An outright gift
- A gift in your will or living trust
- A retained life estate
- A charitable remainder unitrust
- A bargain sale
- A charitable lead trust
- A memorial or endowed gift

4-H youth are Ready 4 Work

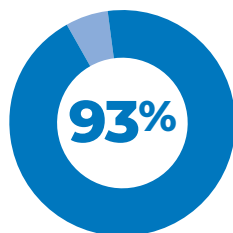
With support from Compeer Financial, the Ready 4 Work program helped youth across Illinois gain real-world job skills—like writing resumes, preparing for interviews, and managing time. Hands-on mock interviews gave participants a chance to practice and build confidence.

The program reached over a dozen counties and took place in schools, clubs, and community settings. Thanks to this investment, more youth had access to helpful materials like career planning guides and professional portfolios—tools they'll use as they take the next step toward their future careers.

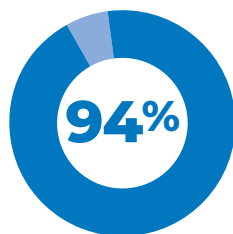
Beyond Ready Outcomes

4-H Influence on College & Career

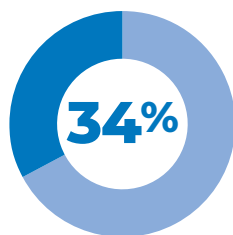
*Responses from 4-H Senior Survey



Said their 4-H experience helped them feel ready for the workplace

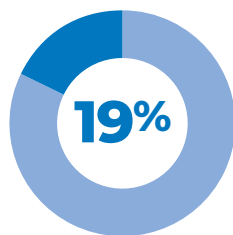


Said their 4-H experience helped them feel ready for adulthood



Certifications

Said they received a certification during their time in 4-H



Entrepreneurship

Said they started a business as a result of being engaged with 4-H



Top Certifications

- CPR
- First Aid
- Food Safety
- Babysitting

Top Business Types

- Agriculture/Horticulture
- Animal Husbandry
- Pet Service
- Handmade Goods
- Food & Beverage
- Creative Service
- Home Services

This program was made possible through the generosity of





Igniting career readiness!

This four-day interactive summit held in Washington D.C. helped teens find their spark through inspiring speakers, hands-on workshops, off-site experiences, career exploration and connecting with peers.

Ignite is a step forward in the journey of becoming beyond ready. At Ignite, teens collaborate, create and cultivate a passion for expanding their minds and their world—becoming resilient and BEYOND READY for everything life has to offer.

Capturing Moments, Creating Memories

Illinois 4-H youth viewpoints truly inspire!

The Moments That Matter Virtual Photography Contest invited youth to highlight the experiences that shaped their 4-H journey, their community, and the surrounding world. Youth are using their camera to tell the stories that resonate.



Emma Bafaloukos was named the “Best Use of Lighting” specialty winner in the 4-H Moments that Matter photography contest for her photo Crescent Moon over Horse Farm.



ABOUT THE WINNER:

Willard Rozanas of Boone County shared, “I took this picture in black and white so as to focus more on the architecture of the buildings, without the distraction of various shades of color. This picture is special to me because I took this right outside the hotel I stayed in while at National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Georgia.”



Meet the Art Ambassador Team!



Avery Edler
Will County



Abby Sommer
McLean County



Ella McGinity
Henderson County



Emily Herrirck
Rock Island County



Reese Connor
McHenry County



Perla Juarez Cuevas
Moultrie-Douglas
County



Lauren Hosfield
Clark County



Allissa Martin
Ogle County



Harper Johnson
Whiteside County



Jelina Martinez
DeKalb County



Luke Passwater
LaSalle County

The Illinois 4-H Art Ambassador Team is a creative force dedicated to inspiring and leading through the arts! These talented youth will take part in exciting artistic opportunities, including facilitating art experiences at the Illinois State Fair, organizing creative arts retreat, and growing their skills alongside other passionate artists.





4-H Youth Films Go Global at Route 66 Film Festival

Four Illinois 4-H members represented Illinois 4-H at the 23rd Annual International Route 66 Film Festival in Springfield Nov. 1-2. Their short films were selected among submissions from 21 countries, highlighting the creativity and dedication of these young filmmakers. Only a limited number of submissions were chosen for live screenings, making this an incredible achievement for the 4-H members.

Colin Weber from Hancock County presented Illinois State Capitol & Illinois State Archives, a documentary showcasing Illinois history. McLean County's Alyssa Thompson shared The Addiction, a powerful film exploring personal challenges and growth. Gracelyn Abell from Whiteside County premiered Meraki: A Week in the Life, a film originally created as a high school English project that transformed into a 4-H entry. Larson Huss of DeKalb County debuted his animated stop-motion film, Mr. Cool and the ATM, developed through a 4-H video-making project.

Larson Huss was honored as the Best Junior Filmmaker at the festival.

New artists in residence!

In a creative virtual workshop, youth explored the art of junk journaling—transforming everyday materials into meaningful, one-of-a-kind journals. Participants learned techniques like collage, layering, doodling, and upcycling as they crafted pages that reflected their personal stories, interests, and dreams.

.....
Anna Eggemeyer of the Cottonwood 4-H club in Whiteside County works on her junk journal page during the virtual Scraps to Stories: Junk Journal workshop held on February 17th, 2025.
.....

Along the way, they discovered how to repurpose common items, experiment with different layouts, and use art as a form of self-expression. From ticket stubs and favorite quotes to mini sketches and photos, each journal became a unique reflection of its creator—all while building connection in a fun and supportive space.



“I enjoy journaling and collage already, so I’m excited to work on my junk journaling skills.”

Junk Journal Participant

100%

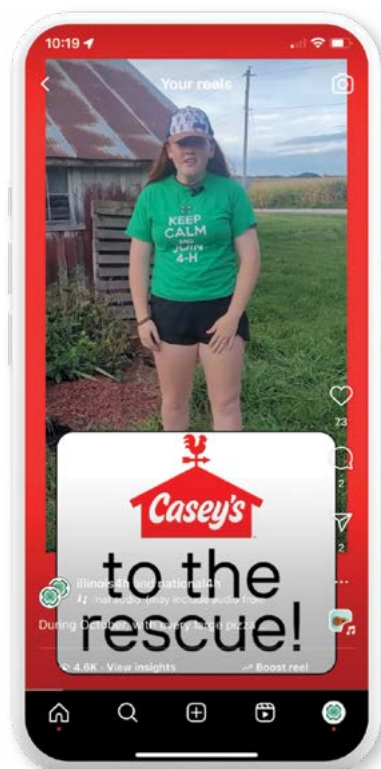
strongly or somewhat agreed that the workshop inspired the exploration of creativity in new ways.

100%

strongly or somewhat agreed that junk journaling provides a mindful activity.

89%

agreed they would create another junk journal on their own.



“OMG your 4-H’ers understood the assignment”

National 4-H Social Media Manager

Illinois 4-H Influencers take on a new national assignment from Casey’s!

From eye-catching photos to engaging reels, the Illinois 4-H Influencers brought their creativity and passion to the forefront for a nationwide cause. In celebration of National 4-H Month this October, the team helped amplify a meaningful partnership between Casey’s and 4-H.

Through this collaboration, Casey’s pledged to donate \$1 for every whole pizza purchased throughout the month, with proceeds benefiting 4-H clubs across the country.

Thanks to the Influencers’ hard work and digital storytelling, the message reached new audiences, turning everyday pizza orders into powerful acts of support for youth development.



See more youth created content as team members learn the communications craft on **@Illinois4H on Instagram.**

Exciting impacts for Beyond Ready content creators:

100%

of respondents agreed their confidence in creating content increased.

100%

said they gained skills in photography/videography and leadership/teamwork.

80%+

felt more ready for the workplace and more confident using digital tools.

80%+

learned more about branding, social strategy, and gauging audience engagement.



Photo credit: Emily Sidwell

Solar Sprint Sparks STEM Learning

University of Illinois Extension 4-H partnered with Jacksonville Middle School to deliver a hands-on STEM program using the Junior Solar Sprint curriculum, supported by Sol Systems, LLC. Over nine sessions, 24 eighth-grade students learned about solar energy, direct current systems, and vehicle engineering before designing, building, and racing their own solar-powered cars. The program emphasized renewable energy, teamwork, and sustainability, with students dismantling their vehicles after race day for future reuse.



75%

of participating students expressed belief in the growing importance of electricity generated by renewable sources within their lifetime

100%

of participating students would recommend this program to their teachers for future implementation.

Ride Right Rally Pilots New Safety Learning Experience for Rural Youth



Story by Bryan Schullian Photo credit: Amy Zepp

More than 300 sixth-grade students from five western Illinois counties gathered for the inaugural Ride Right Rally, a hands-on safety day focused on off-road vehicle safety. Hosted by Illinois 4-H and Adams County 4-H, this pilot event featured seven rotating stations covering topics like ATV safety, mower and PTO operation, bicycle rules of the road, and roll-over protection systems (ROPS).

Students also witnessed a live emergency response demonstration—including an Air Evac helicopter landing—thanks to Adams County EMS. The experience highlighted how quickly accidents can happen and the importance of safety knowledge and precautions.

The event addressed a critical issue: over 500,000 people in the U.S. sought emergency care for off-road vehicle accidents from 2018 to 2022, with youth under 15 accounting for 12% of fatalities. Organizers hope to raise awareness and reduce risks by empowering youth through education.

The Ride Right Rally was made possible by a collaborative team of partners, including Birkey's Farm Store, Heritage Tractor, Smith Brothers Powersports, local Farm Bureaus, and several Adams County agencies. With its successful debut, the event is being considered for expansion into a statewide youth safety program.

"We're giving students practical safety skills now—before they ever get behind the wheel of an ATV or hop on a mower," said Siera Duesterhaus, Adams County 4-H Program Coordinator.





Your gift helps 4-H do more!

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- 4-H Environment Fund
- 4-H for Our Future Fund
- 4-H Memorial Camp

Building Climate Confidence in 4-H Youth Programming

Illinois 4-H youth are engaging with one of the most complex challenges of our time—climate change—through hands-on STEM learning designed to spark curiosity and environmental stewardship.

Curt Sinclair, a longtime 4-H educator, is helping young people across Illinois connect with the outdoors through activities like planting oak seedlings and

building solar-powered cars. Recently, Sinclair joined other Extension professionals in completing Integrating Climate Into Extension Programming, a new training developed by Illinois Extension to boost knowledge and confidence around climate science and communication.

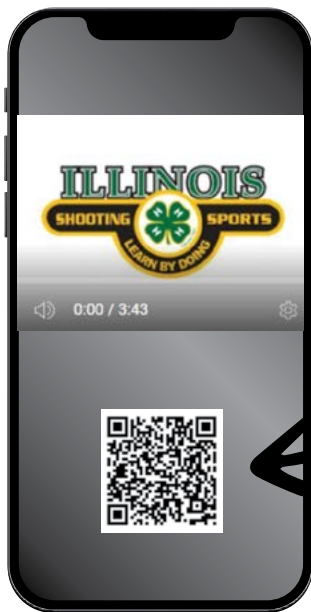
Sinclair is already applying what he learned, adding climate-focused content to his 4-H

fishing curriculum. “The course reminds us that a positive tone is necessary to keep minds open,” Sinclair says. “It’s totally doable for us to create change—because we’ve done it before.”

The effort reflects how Illinois 4-H, as part of University of Illinois Extension, is preparing youth to face real-world challenges with science, leadership, and hope.

Bullseye! Youth Archery in Action

"The 2025 Illinois 4-H State Shooting competitions were amazing experiences for everyone involved. Not only did youth get to exhibit their skills, but as an Ambassador I got the privilege of seeing the connections made between youth, parents, coaches, and volunteers, showing how the Illinois 4-H Shooting Sports program can bring us all together" Alex Paul, Wayne County



Scan the code
to watch video
coverage of
our Fall 2024
State Shotgun
Shoot or head to
[go.illinois.edu/
FallShotgunShoot](https://go.illinois.edu/FallShotgunShoot)



Youth Ambassadors Hit the mark with 4-H

Shooting Sports Ambassador Rebecca Perkins expressed, “4-H shooting sports is an incredible program. It teaches skills and discipline in a way that is engaging and fun for all ages. When you start, it will likely not be easy. Much like any sport or skill, you won’t be perfect the very first time you try it. But if you stick to it, you will look back one day and see how far you’ve come. You will see the way it has impacted your life, whether by the friends you made or the skills you learned. Stick to it, learn, grow, make friends, and most importantly, have fun. If you keep trying, I know you’ll have a blast.”



State Shoots were made possible by the generosity of Ducks Unlimited



Photo credit: Alex Paul

Illinois 4-H National Shooting Sports Ambassadors Alex Paul of Wayne County and Rebecca Perkins of McHenry County

Your gift helps 4-H do more!

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- Illinois 4-H Shooting Sports program fund
- 4-H for our Future Fund





From Farm to Future: IL 4-H Youth Takes Their Voice to the Capital

Matias Habib of Kendall County was chosen to represent 4-H in the 2025 National Ag Day Student Leadership Program in Washington, D.C. This Agriculture Council of America (ACA)-sponsored program equips young leaders to advocate for agriculture's role in society and the economy. Habib was one of three 4-H representatives selected nationwide, joining students from FFA, AFA, and MANRRS to engage with industry leaders and policymakers.



With your help, the 4-H Foundation helps make more happen!

Travel to this national experience was made possible by the generosity of Illinois 4-H Foundation donors.

Your gift helps 4-H do more!

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- Illinois 4-H College and Career Readiness Fund
- 4-H Youth Leadership Fund



Empowering Youth, Expanding Access: Illinois 4-H Food Advocacy Grants in Action



Food Advocacy Grant Program Reach:

14

Youth-Led
Advocacy Projects
Funded

10

Rural Projects

4

Metro/Urban
Projects

725

People Estimated
in Project Reach

100%

of Funding to
New 4-H Clubs or
Projects

Food Advocacy Grant Key Outcomes:

Expanded Program Reach: With support from Compeer, the Food Advocacy Grant program received 27 grant applications from 23 Illinois counties, the most applications we've ever received. We were then able to, in turn, support the largest amount of food advocacy programming, accepting and funding 14 youth-led food advocacy projects in 2024. This led to a 50% increase in the amount of grant projects we were able to support which is the largest growth we've seen to date year over year.

Skill Development & Workforce Preparation: 4-H youth leaders who participate in this program are gaining foundational skills that are not easy to come by in middle and high school. When the grant program is announced to 4-H staff statewide, they find 4-H'ers in their area that have strong leadership skills and an interest in making their community a better place and those youth are the ones to fill out the Food Advocacy Grant application. This requires them to become familiar with the grant-making process as they are responsible for submitting the project narrative, the budget justification, and the explanation for how funds will be spent. They are also responsible for turning in a report in a timely fashion. All of this emphasizes the importance of communication, analytical thinking and reliability.

Hands-on Learning: Similar to other 4-H programs, the Food Advocacy Grant process emphasizes the importance of creating a 'learn by doing' environment for young people. Working with the support of their local 4-H leaders and 4-H staff who support them, 4-H'ers organize and lead meetings



Photo credit: Rob Stroud Journal Gazette-Times Call

to discuss their grant proposals. They then draft proposals for review by their 4-H mentor/staff person before submitting them to the State 4-H office for review. They also have the opportunity to learn from their application as they receive written remarks and feedback on how to improve their proposal.

Resource Accessibility: With funding support from Compeer, the Food Advocacy Grant program in 2024 was able to support grant projects from 12 Illinois counties. Of those counties, 10 of them were rural counties with high rates of food insecurity with the remaining 4 being metro and urban areas with high rates of food insecurity. This was a big success for our program and for 4-H as a whole in Illinois because these areas are typically underrepresented in statewide opportunities due to some of the greater barriers to participation that exist.



zoom Workplace Meeting Annabelle Lu's screen Original sound for musicians: off View

MEET THE FA24 TEAM!

Annabelle Lu Joseph Mercado Faye Wettstein Jasmine O'Connor
Julia Oberg Stanley Pang Vageesh Ramaswamy Tom Hong

Stanley Pang Mark Becker
Annabelle Lu Jasmine O'Connor
Faye Wettstein Vageesh Ramaswamy
Tom Hong Julia Oberg
Joseph Mercado

Audio Video Participants 17 Chat React Share Host tools Breakout rooms Record More End

Growing Engagement and Interest in Agriculture

The Sprout curriculum, developed by students in the Enactus RSO at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, takes a collaborative approach to igniting interest and learning in diverse agricultural topics. Through this partnership, Illinois 4-H is expanding opportunities for youth to explore Agriculture and Food Systems, with plans to offer the program statewide. This initiative is designed to engage new audiences, spark excitement, and prepare the next generation of leaders to make an impact in the agriculture industry.



Empowering Future Leaders in Agriculture

The Women Changing the Face of Agriculture Conference is more than a gathering—it's a catalyst for progress. This dynamic outreach event empowers young women to explore diverse career paths in agriculture while connecting with mentors who are leading change across the industry. As the sector continues to evolve, the conference plays a vital role in advancing equity, celebrating leadership, and ensuring that women's voices remain central to agriculture's future.



Cooking up workforce and life skills

Illinois 4-H proudly sent its first-ever Food Challenge team to compete at the National 4-H Food Challenge held at the Texas State Fair. Representing the state were Isiah Stephenson, Eric Sutton, and Aiden Toolhill, coached by Clinton High School foods teacher Gayle Bowman. Competing against 15 teams from 12 states, the Illinois team showcased creativity, collaboration, and culinary skill. Though they did not advance to the final round, their hard work and dedication made a lasting impression in this exciting national debut.

**Your gift
helps 4-H
do more!**

GIVE TO SUPPORT

- 4-H Healthy Living/Nutrition Fund
- Illinois 4-H Endowment Fund



This program was
made possible by
the generosity of

ILLINOIS
BEEF

Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers



Emergency Response Ready!

Athens High School youth are now better prepared to respond in emergencies thanks to a hands-on CPR training coordinated by Menard County 4-H. Through this free 4-H In Your Classroom program, students learned to recognize cardiac emergencies, perform chest compressions, and use automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Led by certified instructors, including Erin Nelson, RN, and members of the Illinois National Guard, the training also covered tourniquet techniques and gas mask usage, providing real-world emergency response skills.

Beyond learning CPR, students gained the confidence to act in critical moments. Many shared how the experience changed their perspective, with some even considering careers in the medical field. "This opportunity can save someone's life," said Carley, class of '25. Surveyed students unanimously agreed the program should continue for future classes, reinforcing 4-H's mission to equip youth with the skills they need to lead and serve their communities.

Writer and photo credit: Stacie Skelton





Photo and Writing Credit: Jaylynn Schober

Empowering Youth to Tackle Mental Health with Confidence

According to the World Health Organization, 14% of youth ages 10-19 years old experience a mental health condition. This is why the Your Thoughts Matter curriculum is a great instrument for identifying mental health disorders and erasing the stigma associated with them. Youth Educator Jaylynn Schober and Clark County 4-H EPC Jennifer Bishop teamed up to teach the Your Thoughts Matter curriculum to a group of eighth graders in the Martinsville school district. Students learned about different disorders, the stigmas around them, and how they can be resilient. At the end of the program, students created their own mental health toolkit to help them be prepared and increase their own mindfulness around mental health issues.

Mindful Movement: Youth Embrace Healthy Living at Ignite



IL PROGRAM OUTCOMES | 4-H Influence on Community & Health

70% of youth who attended mindfulness programs reported they have learned skills to remain calm when in stressful situations.



The Illinois 4-H Food Challenge hosted its second annual culminating statewide event on June 14, bringing together talented young chefs from across the state to showcase their culinary skills. This program is designed to help youth develop expertise in nutrition, healthy food preparation, food safety, communication, and teamwork through hands-on culinary experience.

Since its inception in 2015, the Illinois 4-H Food Challenge has seen participation from over 5,000 youth.

76% said their understanding of kitchen safety was excellent after participating in this program (up from 36% before the program).



Scan the code to watch video coverage of our 2025 State Food Challenge or head to go.illinois.edu/FoodChallengeVideo

This program was made possible by the generosity of

ILLINOIS BEEF
Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers



Junior Leadership Conference

A weekend full of creating new memories and leadership skills is what you can find at the Junior Leadership Conference. Participants started the weekend attending four different workshops along with three more the following day. Within these workshops, youth engage in interactive activities and discussions, while learning effective leadership strategies.

100+
7th and 8th
graders

25
Youth Leadership
Team Members



88%

of attendees felt motivated to influence and impact others because of the 4-H Junior Leadership Conference

This program was made possible by the generosity of



“The core value of JLC is to teach the next generation of leaders about the skills that will help them become better leaders in their clubs and communities,”

Ross Vancil, chair of the 2024 Youth Leadership Team

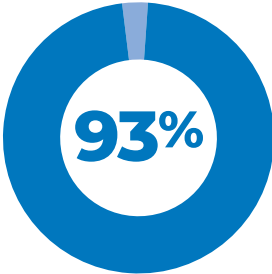
Teaching Tomorrow: Teens Lead the Way



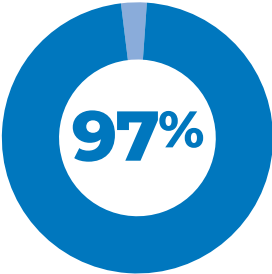
Photo credit: Kristi Stout

Firsthand Account

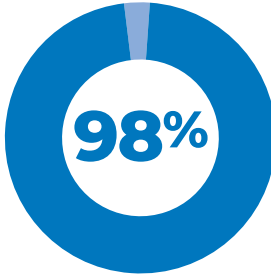
“ Teen Teacher Gabbie shares her firsthand experience with the program: Teaching kids is what I want to do because I think it will bring me so much peace and joy. Luckily, that is what I experienced during my first lesson. I went into the classroom feeling confident and ready to speak in front of them. They are first graders so I was not worried about them being too judgemental, they were very good and listened while I was speaking. They had some opinions about their PB&J's though, some complained about not liking jelly which they resolved on their own. I love when they are little adults and figure it out, it is so interesting watching them understand and learn new things. All of the students did a good job at paying attention and the one big challenge I had was keeping eye contact. For some reason it was hard for me to look at their faces, I think it was because I was afraid I'd laugh. They also loved doing the 4H pledge, they took it very seriously to learn the hand movements. Overall it was a great experience and I look forward to doing it again. ”



Said their Teen Teacher experience will help them in the future



Felt motivated to influence and impact others



Felt supported by adults in the program

Leading Across the Nation: Illinois 4-H Teen Joins National Leadership Team

Alex Paul of Wayne County is making national waves as a member of the National 4-H Youth Leadership Team, helping shape the 2025 National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C. Selected through a competitive nationwide process, Alex is one of six teens guiding key elements of the flagship USDA youth event, from logistics to program design. Inspired by his own experience as a delegate, Alex now works alongside peers from across the country to elevate youth voice and leadership. A passionate 4-H member, state leadership officer, and Shooting Sports Ambassador, Alex plans to study accounting at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and pursue law school—carrying his 4-H leadership journey forward.

“Serving as a National 4-H Youth Leadership Team Member was one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve ever had. From interacting with attendees and watching them develop their presentations to getting to speak in front of the USDA Headquarters, National YLT gave me the opportunity to develop my own skills, network, and help to give conference delegates an experience as amazing and insightful as my own.”



Inspiring Leaders, Impacting the Future

Illinois delegates headed to National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Georgia, where they expanded their skills, engaged with 4-H members across the US, and gained inspiration to make an impact in their club, community, country, and world.



Delegate Ryan Carlson from Marshall-Putnam County wrote the following reflecting on the trip.

*“Five Days, One Family
Five days together, ten hearts aligned,
Strangers at first, but soon we’d find,
Laughter and memories, dancing through the night,
Bonded in moments, everything felt right.*

*Workshops and dinners, endless and bright,
We cherished the hours, from morning to night.
Sleep was a luxury we didn’t have time to miss,
For every second together was pure bliss.*

*When the trip ended, we all felt the sting,
Not ready to part, to let go of the swing.
But the friendships we formed will forever stay,
A family we built, in just five days.”*

Youth Step Into Their Future at Illini Summer Academies



This summer, over 150 Illinois 4-H teens spent a week living and learning on the University of Illinois campus, exploring career pathways through hands-on experiences in 11 different academies. From veterinary medicine to aerospace engineering, youth connected with experts, built new skills, and got a firsthand look at college life.



ISA Report Card:

Youth respondents went from 16% knowing a lot about the topic of their academy topic before attending ISA to **86%** knowing a lot about the topic of their academy after attending ISA.

Youth respondents went from 16% knowing a lot about careers related to their academy before attending ISA to **73%** knowing a lot about careers related to their academy after attending ISA.

Youth respondents went from 33% being very interested in attending UIUC before attending ISA to **64%** being very interested in attending UIUC after attending ISA.

79% of respondents said that UIUC was in their top 3 choices of colleges (19% overall said it was their first choice).

89% of youth respondents said that ISA gave them the opportunity to explore something they really care about.

89% of youth respondents said that they were passionate about the things they did at ISA

88% of youth respondents said that they want to learn more about the topics covered at ISA

85% of youth respondents said that they felt motivated to influence and impact others because of ISA

72% of youth respondents said that their experience at ISA helped them feel ready for the workplace

Youths' favorite experiences at 2025 ISA included: meeting new people, making friends, and connecting with peers; practical, immersive learning experiences in their fields of interests; fun events and downtime; experiencing college life, especially staying in dorms; learning about future careers and meeting professionals.



Meet the youth leaders who made ISA happen!

12 academies

200 high school students from 37 Illinois Counties

63% first 4-H experience.



Meet the 2025 Design Team



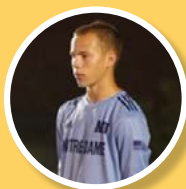
Zena Nathaniel

A Sophomore in high school from Grundy County, Zena enjoys producing and editing video content for family, friends, and nonprofit organizations. She also creates sports media content for a local USATF club, local media, her high school's sports media club, and as a high school football team manager. Zena spends time reading, writing, connecting with family and friends, listening to music, and running track.



Noah Felipe Muñoz-Lo

A Senior in high school from Cook County, Noah is a nature lover, an explorer, a car enthusiast, and a student with a strong curiosity and desire to learn. His constant wonder as to how things work on the atomic level has led him to pursue chemistry as a career. His goal is to protect the beauty of nature and inspire other curious kids along the way.



Max Schmidt

A Sophomore in high school from Peoria County, Max is an accomplished athlete and soccer player with a passion for sportsmanship, teamwork, and competition that brings out the best in everyone. He enjoys being out in nature and hanging out with friends on the weekends. Max is looking forward to either attending the U of I or playing soccer on the collegiate level.



Temi Oyedele

A Sophomore from Cook County, Temi enjoys spending time reading and expressing herself in drawing, crocheting, and making gifts for the people in her life. She likes to learn new things and explore opportunities for growth. Temi is a leader who brings people together!



Photo credit, Maria Moore

Building Tomorrow's Innovators: 4-H Robotics Competition Boosts Workforce Readiness

A day of innovation, teamwork, and high-energy problem solving! From coding challenges to engineering excellence, these 4-H'ers brought their A-game to the State Robotics Competition.

We saw robots in action, team spirit on display, and future STEM leaders in the making!

130

Youth
participated

25

Teams
participated





Make a difference today & Save on Taxes with a gift from your IRA!

If you are 70½ or older, you can make a tax-free distribution from your individual retirement account (IRA) to the University of Illinois Foundation (UIF Tax ID 37-6006007) for the benefit of Illinois 4-H at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

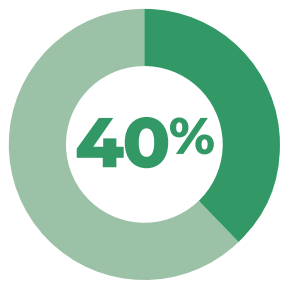
The qualified charitable distribution (QCD) allows you to direct your IRA custodian to transfer up to \$108,000 (adjusted annually for inflation) each year

to a qualifying charity like UIF without incurring income tax on your withdrawal—reducing your taxable income. If you are required to take minimum distributions, you can satisfy all or part of your obligation.

Ask us about using a QCD to establish a gift that pays you income now and provides for Illinois 4-H in the future! (Some rules apply)

Inspiring Minds: 4-H Members Lead Hands-On STEM Day in Cook County

Fritz and Gretchen McDade, Dylan and Shawn Hibbard, Isabella Roth and Owen Spark of the Cook County Urban Adventurers Club held a STEM Day event, where each member planned and taught an activity. They demonstrated 3-D printing using tinkercad, squishy circuits, snap circuits, lego robotics and more.



Said that 4-H is
influential in their
interest in STEM

According to the National
4-H Index Survey



Photo credit: Julie Roth



Soaring into **STEM:** Youth Take Flight with Drone Technology

Illinois 4-H youth are reaching new heights through hands-on STEM learning with drone technology. Through statewide workshops and special interest clubs, participants gain experience in flight mechanics, coding, and real-world applications of unmanned aerial systems. These programs spark curiosity while building in-demand skills that prepare youth for future careers in science and technology.



From Ideas to Creations: Young Minds at Work

In the STEM track at the national Ignite Conference, teens experience innovation in action through hands-on challenges in robotics, engineering, coding, and emerging technologies. They dive into fields like artificial intelligence (AI), computer science, physics, and chemistry—developing the technical and analytical skills to thrive in a technology-driven world. This track encourages experimentation, creative problem-solving, and future-focused thinking.

The Force Behind Beyond Ready Futures

Behind every 4-H success story is a dedicated volunteer who helped make it possible. Whether leading a club, mentoring a teen, or coordinating an event, 4-H volunteers are the heart of our program. This year, our amazing network of Illinois 4-H volunteers gave their time, talents, and care to help youth grow into confident leaders. Their impact reaches far beyond meeting nights and fairgrounds—it's seen in the skills youth gain, the friendships they form, and the futures they build. Volunteers don't just support 4-H; they shape it.



Photo Credit: Lindsay Adams

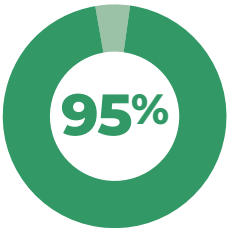




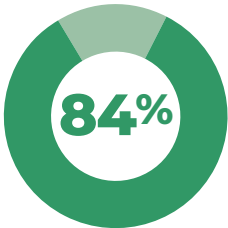
4-H Volunteers who responded to the 2024 North Central Region Volunteer Impact Study reported:

Photo Credit: Heather Willis

Volunteers bring substantial value to extension and 4-H programs.



taught youth new skills



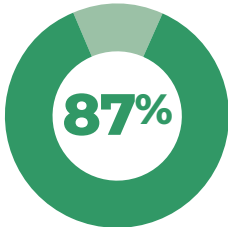
recruited new youth to 4-H



planned learning experiences



recruited new volunteers to 4-H



shared the value of the 4-H program



4-H Salute to Excellence Awards

Dorothy Wire – 2025 Illinois Salute to Excellence Lifetime Volunteer, from Stephenson County

Dorothy Wire: A Legacy of Dedication to Illinois 4-H

Blake Hennenfent – 2025 Salute to Excellence Illinois Volunteer of the Year, from Knox County

2025 Salute to Excellence North Central Region Volunteer of the Year, from Knox County

Blake Hennenfent: A Legacy of Leadership and Service in 4-H

Extraordinary volunteers inducted into 2025 Illinois 4-H Hall of Fame

Illinois 4-H volunteers empower and prepare youth for success as the program relies on its more than 15,000 volunteers to fill key leadership and mentoring roles. Longtime volunteers and former staff members were recently honored by the Illinois 4-H Program for their selfless dedication to the University of Illinois Extension 4-H youth development program.



Rick Franseen, Boone County
Barbara Schlund, Bureau County
Terry Strauch, Calhoun County
Brian & Sharon Witt, Carroll County
David Virgin, Cass County
Nicole Bailey, Christian County
Benjamin Titus, Clark County
Keith Payne, Clay County
Michelle Lyon, Cook County
Todd Liston, Crawford County
Jay & Melissa Maxey, Cumberland County
Dan & Kathryn Loveless, DeWitt County
Dennis Drendel, DeKalb County
Stephanie Walker, Douglas County
Christina Ladage, Douglas County
Sara Barentine, DuPage County
Kristen Trogon, Edgar County
Bonita Thomason, Edwards County

Trish Purcell, Effingham County
Ben Frazier, Fayette County
Dallas & Jane Meyer, Ford County
Jason & Heather Sample, Franklin County
Crista Hartstirn, Fulton County
Jerry Joyce, Greene County
Kent Weber, Grundy County
Linda Webb, Hancock County
Ed Brokaw, Henderson County
Darrel Clatterbuck, Iroquois County
Gary Joe Johnson, Jasper County
Joe & Lynn Richey, Jersey County
Debra Girot, Jo Daviess County
Jacob O'Neal, Johnson County
Steve Almburg, Kane County
Rick White, Kankakee County
Sarah Stewart, Kendall County
Kelli Hand, Knox County
Tammy Olson, Lake County

Julie Decker, Lawrence County
Mackenzie Treadwell, Lee County
Anne Corrigan, Livingston County
Deanna Voyles, Logan County
Diane Daggett, Macon County
Jeff Behme, Macoupin County
Ocie Steiner, Madison County
Pat Showalter, Mason County
Curt Rigg, McDonough County
Donna Douglas, McHenry County
David Schwenk, McLean County
Melanie Neuleib-Zimmerman, Mercer County
Raeleen Neary, Monroe County
Todd & Amy Knodle, Montgomery County
Tammy White, Morgan County
Karen Marsh, Ogle County
Robin Forney, Peoria County
Kristin Rowlen, Piatt County

Ida Boyle-Bruch, Putnam County
Dennis Anderson, Richland County
Lori Tharp, Rock Island County
Lance Steckel, Scott County
Lisa Mott, Shelby County
Don Kaiser, St. Clair County
Rita Koch, Stephenson County
Jay Boose, Vermilion County
Carrie Tennis, Wabash County
Stephanie Sims, Warren County
Barkley Barnard, Wayne County
Holly Davis, White County
Teresa Galloway, Whiteside County
David Mills, Will County
Karin Lyons, Winnebago County
John & Suzie Schertz, Woodford County

Seibold Inducted into National 4-H Hall of Fame



Sheri Seibold was inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame in Atlanta, GA

this Fall.

Sheri dedicated 34 years to the University of Illinois Extension, shaping the 4-H program through her leadership, innovation, and commitment to volunteerism. She began her career as an Extension Home Economist but found her passion in youth development, serving as a Youth Adviser, Extension Educator, and ultimately as the State Extension Volunteer Specialist.

Her influence extended beyond Illinois, contributing to national 4-H initiatives, developing volunteer training systems, and fostering community partnerships. She played a pivotal role in creating competency-based training models, character education programs, and inclusive outreach efforts, including impactful work with Hispanic communities.

Sheri was a mentor, collaborator, and role model who led by example, always prioritizing service to others. She passed away on April 21, 2019, leaving an indelible mark on 4-H.

Congratulations to our Illinois 4-H Alumni Award Winners



Pam Shaffer

2025 IL 4-H Alumni Award Winner
Adams County 4-H Alumna



Lindsay Young

2025 IL 4-H Alumni Award Winner
Whiteside County 4-H Alumna



Chase Dittmar

2025 IL 4-H Young Alumni Award Winner
JoDaviess County 4-H Alumnus



Banan Garada

2025 IL 4-H Young Alumni Award Winner
Champaign County 4-H Alumna



The Wendal Riggins Family from McDonough County named 2025 Family Spirit Award Winners!

The Illinois 4-H Family Spirit Award was created in 2002 as a way of recognizing an Illinois family who has substantially benefited from and who continues to advocate for the Illinois 4-H program over multiple generations. Families must have a minimum of three generations of 4-H involvement, 15 family members that have either been 4-H members, leaders, or volunteers and 100 cumulative years of 4-H membership or volunteerism.

To learn more about the 2025 Illinois 4-H Alumni Award winners:
go.illinois.edu/4HALumniAwardWinners

Nominations for the 2026 Illinois 4-H Alumni Awards are now open through March 15, 2026
More information: go.illinois.edu/4halumniawards

Illinois 4-H Alumni Advisory Committee completes first year.

The Illinois 4-H Alumni Advisory Committee was established in May 2024 to support the strategic objectives of the Illinois 4-H Alumni Association. Special thanks to the inaugural 2024-2025 4-H Alumni Advisory Committee.

Caleigh Kupferschmid, District 1 Director

Mike Razim, District 1 Director

William VanWassenhove, District 1 Director

Bob Walberg, District 1 Director

Jeff Behme, District 2 Director

Mindy Brown, District 2 Director

Denny Wallin, District 2 Director

Craig Pessman, District 3 Director

Barb Schumacher, District 3 Director

Mallory Ames, Young Alumni Director

Caroline Ahrends, Collegiate 4-H Director

Emma Hughes, 4-H Ambassador Director

Krish Nangia, 4-H Ambassador Director

Ojas Shas, 4-H Ambassador Director

Myla Munro, 4-H Staff Advisory Committee

Tina Veal, Ex-Officio

Kevin Carey, Ex-Officio

Learn more the Illinois 4-H Alumni Advisory Committee and the application process:

Inagural Illinois 4-H Alumni Event Held at John Deere



The Illinois 4-H Alumni Association hosted its inaugural alumni event at John Deere in Coal Valley, Illinois, in March 2025. Attendees reconnected with fellow 4-H alumni, shared memories, and heard from key leaders about the future goals and objectives of the Illinois 4-H program.



Connecting with 4-H Alumni

It was great to connect with alumni from near and far throughout the year—at the Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade, Farm Progress Show, and 4-H Memorial Camp's 75th anniversary celebrations. Each event was an opportunity to share memories, celebrate Illinois 4-H pride, and strengthen lifelong connections.



**Are you
Illinois
4-H
Grown?**

Register today or encourage a 4-H friend.

The Illinois 4-H Alumni Association seeks 4-H alumni to register for a free membership and stay connected.

go.illinois.edu/4halum

Ideas for Giving

Donating appreciated securities or mutual fund shares that you have held one year or longer can be a tax-wise way to support Illinois 4-H. You will receive an income tax for the full market value of the gift (if you itemize) and may avoid federal and state tax on the capital gain.

IRA charitable gift: Distributions from your traditional Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and employer-sponsored retirement plans are considered taxable income. A charitable distribution from your IRA directly to the Illinois 4-H Foundation helps you avoid that increase in taxable income and makes a lasting difference in the lives of young people.

A Gift through your estate: A bequest is one of the simplest ways to make a deferred gift and you maintain control of your assets during your lifetime. You can make a bequest by including UIF — for the benefit of the Illinois 4-H — in a provision via your will or living trust. Please share the following language with your estate-planning attorney.

"I leave (\$x,/x%/# of shares/residue) to the University of Illinois Foundation, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation (Tax ID 37-6006007), for the benefit of the Illinois 4-H Foundation supporting the Illinois 4-H Youth Development Program."

Naming UIF beneficiary of your transferable-on-death or payable-on-death brokerage or investment accounts are also wonderful options to support 4-H. We can work with you or your advisor to develop customized language that reflects your wishes. To learn more contact **Angie Barnard** at abarnard@illinois.edu or 217-333-9295 or **Judy Schneider**, UIF Director of Gift Planning judiths@uif.uillinois.edu or 217-244-3351.

INVEST TO

The Illinois 4-H Foundation would like to thank you for your investment. Here is how those gifts are broken down.



4-H FOR OUR FUTURE FUND:

\$217,822 (23.7%)

These gifts help youth with what they need, when they need it!



4-H PROGRAM SPECIFIC:

\$304,991 (33.3%)

These funds help youth grow in a pathway of specialty interests such as shooting sports, food advocacy and more.

DAY, SHAPE TOMORROW

Thank the over **1,800 donors** that provided **\$830,696** to the Illinois 4-H program in 2024-2025.



ENDOWMENTS:

\$83,299 (9.2%)

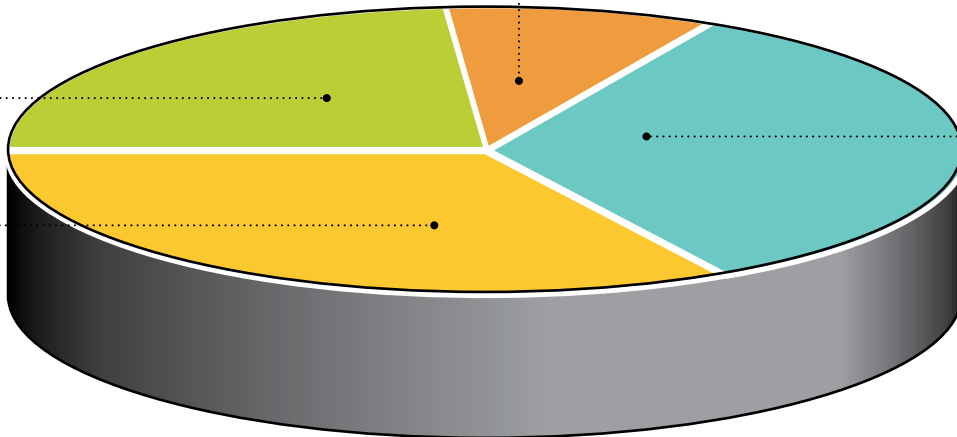
These create a lasting legacy that will detail your wishes and ensure your intentions can be carried out to support a specific 4-H program or area of your choosing.



COUNTY-SPECIFIC 4-H SUPPORT:

\$306,531 (33.8%)

Helps provide needs based county-specific support in programming, scholarships, and more.



What 4-H can do because of you!

1034

Signature programs delivered to help youth face Illinois' challenges such as mental health head on.

156

New clubs reaching Illinois youth with the experiences, mentorship, and life skills they need to become productive adults.

Foundation Impact Report

Beyond Ready because of YOU!

Thanks to your generosity, the Illinois 4-H Foundation awarded \$45,000 in scholarships last year, empowering youth across Illinois to grow, learn, and lead with confidence.

