

# Program Accomplishments

University of Illinois Extension

Madison-St. Clair Unit

July - August 2008

## 4-H Youth Development

### Expansion of 4-H

- 4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Through participation in 4-H, youth learn valuable life skills such as planning and organizing, working with others, decision making, and communication. Through involvement in community service activities, they also learn to exercise concern for others while becoming positive, contributing members of society. Career direction is yet another benefit of 4-H involvement. As members choose from a myriad of career-related projects, and the list keeps growing each year, they have an opportunity to develop new interests and skills as they begin to formulate career goals.

4-H can be a family affair. Youth enroll as members, and other family members can serve as club leaders, meeting helpers, project leaders, or activity coordinators. Through their involvement in 4-H, families have an opportunity to learn more about each other and increase communication, cooperation, problem solving, as well as experience a sense of togetherness.

4-H project shows include one-to-one judging by an expert in the field with the 4-H member. The member explains to the expert how he or she prepared the project. The judge then provides a critique comparing this project to the standard for the area. This critique provides valuable feedback to the 4-H member in "helping make the best better". Following the judging, 4-H members receive a ribbon based on how well they met the established criteria for each particular project area. This summer, there were 1,333 exhibits in Madison County and 806 exhibits in the various project areas in St. Clair County.



Members with outstanding projects were selected for exhibit and judging at the State Fair with a total of 75 members representing the Madison-St. Clair County Unit.

In an effort to help newer 4-H members feel more comfortable with conference judging at the county 4-H shows, volunteers in both counties willingly worked to help them prepare.

**University of Illinois  
Extension  
Madison-St. Clair Unit**  
www.extension.uiuc.edu  
/madisonstclair

900 Hillsboro Avenue,  
P. O. Box 427  
Edwardsville, IL 62025  
(618) 650-7050  
FAX (618) 655-9951  
e-mail:  
madison\_co@extension.  
uiuc.edu

621 South Belt West  
Belleville, IL 62220  
(618) 236-4172  
FAX (618) 236-9416  
stclair\_co@extension.  
uiuc.edu

#### *Staff:*

Belva Blakely  
Family Nutrition

Janet Burnett  
County Director

Jan Denby, Coordinator

Benna Denué, Coordinator

Michaelleen Gerken  
Natural Resources

Denise Godfrey,  
Office Support

Andrea Harris, 4-H

Maritza Lemke  
Family Nutrition

Shannon Murphy  
CAREE Coordinator

Sarah Ruth  
After School Programs

Patricia Shipp  
Family Nutrition

Patty Stanton,  
Office Support

IAITC – Ag Literacy

Julie Tyberendt, 4-H

Dawn Waller  
Youth Development

**Mock conference judging** was conducted with twenty-five 4-H members and twelve parents during local club meetings.

Volunteers provided an overview of the conference judging process, an explanation of the scoring process, demonstration of conference judging, and then served as judges while the youth discussed their mock 4-H projects. Furthermore, additional tips were provided through a parent and youth take-home page. When asked what they liked about this training, several 4-H'ers indicated that they thought it helped build confidence and they learned what to expect at the county shows. When asked how they felt about conference judging prior to the training, many expressed that they were nervous or scared and didn't know what to expect. Following this training, they felt much better as (conference judging) was not as hard as they thought it would be. Many youth were able to state specific examples of how they will prepare for the actual conference judging using the tips they learned through this training.

- Three 4-H families joined families from all over the United States in hosting students from **Japan**. Illinois has been successfully exchanging students with Japan for over thirty years. International experiences are an added opportunity through the 4-H program. The students stayed with the families for three weeks learning about life in the states.



Nana Serizaw stayed with a 4-H family in Marine.

### **Speak Out for Military Youth**

- What do you call a fun and exciting way to learn about decision making, public speaking, and problem-solving? **T.I.T.E.!!** Teen Interactive Theater Education, that is. In July, thirteen young people gathered in the St. Clair County Extension office to do just that! These youth, both brand new and seasoned members of the Speak Out for Military Kid program, explored issues that many military families face during times of deployment. Next, they identified strengths or coping skills that military-connected youth develop as a result of a deployment of a parent or loved one. Finally, participants developed skits which portrayed these issues and solutions to these issues. Practice was the name of the game as participants diligently prepared for their first live performance at the Operation Purple Camp near Waterloo, a camp for youth who are currently or were recently in the midst of a deployment. Approximately one hundred Operation Purple Camp youth and their family members listened intently as the SOMK members delivered an outstanding performance during the camp's closing ceremonies. Audience members remarked "They were right on (in terms of addressing issues affecting youth in military families)." "They did a fabulous job" "We were surprised at how many of the performers were non-military youth—they understand and care enough to do this!" In August, the SOMK gathered again to recap the highlights of this summer program and plan for additional performances.

The **T.I.T.E.** fun was not limited to youth only. Nine adults from various community agencies and organizations took part in the fun experiential learning activities embedded in the T.I.T.E. curriculum! They participated in a two day training led by Ruth Carter, Extension Agent, University of Arizona, in preparation for using this curriculum effectively with the youth they serve. The T.I.T.E. curriculum allows teens to identify and write about the issues affecting their lives, be it military related issues, peer pressure, sexual issues, or other challenges they and their peers often face. The teens conclude their T.I.T.E. program with a performance for other teens and a facilitated discussion with the audience. The teens become the educators of their peers. They are the experts, the mentors, and the stars.

## After School programs

- Summer time often involves a loosely structured routine, much different than what youth are accustomed to during the school year. Going from days when sleep and wake times are more flexible and academic expectations are a faint memory, the need to prepare for the return to school often doesn't register in the minds of youth until the first day of class. Therefore, in effort to make this transition smoother, the **4-H Back 2 School** program was created. This ten day program greeted youth served through the 4-H Teens Reaching for Success Afterschool Program in Granite City, which operates throughout the school year. Funded by the Illinois 4-H Foundation *4-H Program Grant*, eleven youth engaged in a variety of hands-on science based lessons including energy experiments, robotics, aerospace, and horticulture. A density experiment with a regular Pepsi soda can and a Diet Pepsi soda can opened their eyes to how much sugar they consume from one soda. They learned that the regular soda sank while the diet soda floated as the regular soda contains 39 times more sugar than a diet soda. One student vowed to only drink diet soda based on what she learned during this experiment. Problem-solving and determination skills were quite evident as youth worked hard to achieve desired results during the robotics lessons.

On one Friday morning, participants were greeted by three Chinese visitors who chose to visit various 4-H programs throughout the state. The 4-H members proudly shared information about the United States and were even more interested to learn about life in China. The visitors readily engaged in the science lesson by pairing up with a young person to create balloon powered cars using balloons, cardboard, straws, paper towel rolls, string and a variety of other supplies. Not only did the youth learn about science this particular day, but they also experienced a unique learning opportunity in teamwork, accepting differences, and communication with individuals from another culture.

- The **ExCEL** program has continued to grow over the past four years. This past year the students were introduced to martial arts and self-esteem programs, as well as the life skills 4-H programming. The students continue to participate in club and project activities and service learning projects. The Madison School District has incorporated a self-guided computer based math and reading tutorial call SuccessMakers. We have observed gains in students' academic abilities. Consistent student attendance has increased over previous years.

The formal evaluation of the program revealed many positive indicators. According to the student surveys, 95% of the students enjoy the 4-H lessons and 96% of the students look forward to ExCEL. 95% of the students reported their health has improved as a result of the ExCEL nutrition and fitness program. 96% of the parents agree that their child looks forward to school more as a result of the 4-H clubs and almost 100% of parents agree that their child is better at working with fellow students as a result of the 4-H clubs.

Academically, the program has been attributed to improving the test scores dramatically at our Cahokia sites. Since 2004, there has been an average increase of 43% of students who met or exceeded on the ISAT. One of the Madison sites had a 13% increase of those students that met or exceed on the ISAT. 95% of parents felt that their child has improved academically and 88% of the teaching staff have observed students improving academically.



## Community Development

### Developing Community Leadership

- Two years ago, our application to the Community Matters program was accepted by the community development class at University of Illinois.

In August two written correspondences were sent to the Mayor of Fayetteville with these comments:

*I had the opportunity to drive through Fayetteville last night on my way to a meeting. I noticed that you have made some very impressive improvements to the Village hall and firehouse. The changes caught my eye right away.*

*On my return, I passed back through the community. It was dark by this time, but the lighting around the building looked great. I was really impressed with everything that has been done. With the building being right on the main roadway for the village, it shows the pride you have for your community.*

----- *Written by a public official from a larger community.*

*And a letter from a former hometowner....*

*Recently I went through the village of Fayetteville and could not help noticing the improvements made to their quaint village. In the past, the town has appeared a bit on the run down side and I have always believed this to be such a sad thing to happen to a town that my husband's family once called home.*

*The flower beds and planters as well as newly planted trees were a welcome sight and seem to be offering hope. The newly painted village hall and fire house, along with added lighting in front of the fire house, gives one the feeling that there is once again pride in Fayetteville. I believe the village could come alive again with hard work and cooperation. I commend Mayor Brian Funk and anyone else involved in "sprucing-up" the old town. Keep up the good work!*

These unsolicited notes exhibit some of the accomplishments since we first started the program in Fayetteville. We're anxiously hoping that the Governor's Hometown Award will be bestowed on these fine citizens that are working diligently for more notice in the area.



- **How Valuable is your Farmland?** Four St. Clair County Board members attended this valuable program presented by Dr. Kenneth Olson, Professor of Soil Science at University of Illinois offering information on Illinois soils; soil productivity ratings, prime farmland identification, and land appraisal. The program is part of the Local Government Information and Education network series.

## Consumer and Family Sciences

### Lowering Fat, Sugar and Salt in Diet

- The **Family Nutrition Program** serves lower income families in the area teaching food budgeting, food safety, and healthy meals. In July, 985 individuals participated in the two county area with an additional 7,000 receiving educational information via printed handouts. The major focus of FNP in July and August includes youth cooking schools called **Kids in the Kitchen** with approximately 176 youth participating. Youth participate in five 2-3 hour sessions learning the importance of eating healthy. They learn how to read a recipe; prepare and cook delicious and healthy dishes with emphasis on nutrition, food science, safety and sanitation. The cooking camp provides a beginning level in food preparation skills and nutritional knowledge. Participants learn safe food handling, apply nutritional knowledge and increase their confidence in the ability to prepare nutritious foods for themselves and their families. Youth between the ages of 8 and 12 participate. Many of the participating youth had never cooked on a stove or used a knife or peeler. Of course, they were pleased to sample the outcome of what they had made. Some of the children couldn't wait to go home and make it for their mother. Schools were held in Collinsville, Venice, Fairmont City, Cahokia and East St. Louis.

- Can you prevent the onset of diabetes and other diseases with what you do or do not eat? According to recent research, the answer is that maybe you can. To learn about the relationship between food consumption and chronic diseases, particularly diabetes, *Eating to Lower the Risk of Diabetes* was offered to the community in May. Nineteen participated in the class taught by Martha Winter, U of I Extension educator for nutrition and wellness. As a result of this training the volunteers are teaching others in the community with 77 being reported in July. They are teaching *what conditions can lead to diabetes and how proper diet and lifestyle choices can help reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.*
- *Eating Simply and Economically goes nationwide via Associated Press.* The St. Louis Post Dispatch contacted the county director for a menu for a day that would cost a family of four \$8. He was writing an article on ways to cut food costs in these challenging economic times. Referring Carol Schlitt, nutrition and wellness educator to work on this challenging task, Carol teamed with him in writing a helpful lowering food costs article that the Associated Press took nationwide. Carol began hearing from acquaintances across the country who spied the article in their hometown newspaper.

### Food Safety

- For over ten years the Madison County Health Department and Extension have teamed to teach food safety for individuals representing organizations serving food on a one-time basis for fairs, festivals, and church fundraisers. Again, this year volunteers working with food at the **Italian Fest, Collinsville** participated in this food safety training in August. Carol Schlitt, Extension educator serves up a healthy portion of humor mixed with concrete “must do’s “when serving food in quantity.

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

### Home Horticulture Education

- The teachable moment happens every day as master gardeners respond to local homeowners via the *Horticulture Helpline and Ask the Master Gardener at the Land of Goshen Community Market.* For the months of July and August there were more than 192 responses to questions.
- **Radio station, WBGZ,** Alton hosted Master Gardener Bill Klopfenstein and Benna Denué for one hour gardening programs that included the opportunity for listeners to call in their questions. This opportunity occurs every second Tuesday. The co-hosts discussed future classes, the horticulture helpline, some of their experiences as a master gardener, Japanese beetles, etc.
- Seminars on *Late Summer and Fall Blooming Perennials and Summer and Fall Blooming Trees and Shrubs* brought participants from our communities to learn applicable helpful hints. David Robson, U of I Extension horticulture educator explained that trees and shrubs are the backbone of the landscape. Those attending learned about woody ornamentals that can flower from June to November, making a visual impact on the yard.
- Master Gardeners share their enthusiasm and gardening expertise with our local communities.
  - ✓ Joe Knoll, Troy featured speaker for the Maryville Library explained *Growing and Choosing Daylilies.*
  - ✓ The O’Fallon Women’s Guild was standing room only with 85 in attendance for *Flowers and Herbs of the Bible* taught by Master Gardener Jan Villhard.
  - ✓ Master Gardener Bev Allen demonstrated for the Edwardsville Garden Club on *Sandcasting Leaves.*



## Natural Resources

### Watershed Nature Center activities

- July events at the Watershed included a variety of events for all ages. The Watershed hosted local children's book author, Jen Ward to talk about nature writing and publication. Eighteen adults and three children attended the event.
- Three groups of students from the Alton YWCA summer day care participated in exploratory nature hikes at the Watershed for a total of 45 students. Our World Child Development, Belleville also brought 26 students for exploratory hikes as well as dip-netting and macroinvertebrate study. Noah's Ark daycare, Alton brought 8 students for an exploratory hike.
- Natural Resources educator, Michaeleen Gerken taught three lessons for Alton Day Care on botany and terrariums.
- In addition to a half day of volunteer service from the high school football team, the natural resources educator worked with volunteers who put in more than 30 hours of volunteer service in the office, on the trails, and helping with field trips at the Watershed Nature Center.
- The Watershed hosted June Jeffries for a Caterpillar Walk as part of the Get Outdoors series. Jeffries brought a wealth of knowledge and the enthusiasm of an amateur to inspire ten adults and five youth to do some caterpillar hunting.

### Developing Stewards of the Land

- The Master Naturalist program in Southwestern Illinois begins in early September. Participants were recruited, interviewed, and accepted into the program during July and August. Natural Resource educator, Michaeleen Gerken conducted an instructor orientation, assisting professionals from partnering agencies in learning how to incorporate skill-building activities into the curriculum. Thirteen instructors attended.



**Orange areas are one of four program areas of focus for University of Illinois Extension.**

**Blue is the identified issue for Madison-St. Clair unit within the program area.**

**Black describes the programmatic activity conducted within the two-month period.**