



# COOK COUNTY GO-OPERATOR

To serve all our members with meaningful and beneficial programs that reflect our agricultural heritage

## Mark Your Calendar



### January

- 20 Membership Monday **PG 12**
- 29-31 From Food to Flowers: Everything Local Conference **PG 10**

### February

- 14 Scholarship Application Deadline **PG 1**
- 18 Wills & Trusts Workshop **PG 12**
- 19 Solar: Exploring Solar for Ag Operations Webinar **PG 12**
- 25 Grow a Giant Pumpkin 101 **PG 12**
- 28 Community Urban Garden Grant Application Deadline **PG 12**

### March

- 1 & 2 Beginning Beekeeping **PG 10**
- 4 Food Checkout Day Benefit **PG 8**
- 13 Cheese 101 **PG 10**

For participation details on these programs and activities, check out the related information in this publication, go to [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org), or contact the office at 708-354-3276. You can register for most programs by using the member service center at [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org).

## Question of the Month



**What award did Cook County Farm Bureau receive at the IFB Annual Meeting for the most outstanding innovative program for the Board of Director's Future Forward Initiative?**

Call the Farm Bureau at **708-354-3276**, fax your answer to **708-579-6056**, or email to [fbcooperator@gmail.com](mailto:fbcooperator@gmail.com) to enter the drawing for a \$25 gas card. (Please include name, FB number, and phone number)

**December Winner: Billie Jabaay**

**Question: Q: At the November 13th Cook County Farm Bureau Board meeting, who was re-elected to serve as the organization's President?**

**Answer: Janet McCabe**



Illinois Farm Bureau's 331 voting delegates considered a variety of policy resolutions, including topics such as food labeling, apiculture, energy, utilities, and pipelines and farmland ownership during the organization's annual meeting in Chicago on Dec. 9. (Photo by Catrina Rawson, Illinois Farm Bureau).

**Read about your Cook County Farm Bureau's involvement on page 5.**

## 2025 FOUNDATION COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

### Up to \$26,500 Available in Tuition Assistance Scholarships

Careers in agriculture include farming and much more! The Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation has many support opportunities for those who are pursuing careers in the following fields: plant science, animal science, agricultural business, agricultural mechanics, food science, diesel mechanics, ag-related education, education, and/or rural mental health plus more!

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, a total of 19.7 million jobs, or 10.3% of U.S. employment, was related to agriculture in 2020. Farming only made up 13.5% of agricultural employment, food service made up 53.4%, and food and beverage stores made up 16.5%. There are more than one million agriculture-related jobs in Illinois alone.

The CCFB Foundation scholarship application window for the 27th Annual "Farm and Food" Agricultural Scholarship Program is now open. The Foundation offers these scholarships to college students who are pursuing an ag-related career with the opportunity to start or continue their higher education.

**Howard Paarlberg Excellence in Agriculture (\$3,500)** – This scholarship will be provided to the individual with the top ranked application determined by the scholarship review committee with a focus on an agriculturally related career.

**Stuenkel Family Scholarship (\$3,000)** – This scholarship has been designed for individuals and CCFB members who are pursuing higher education with a focus on an agriculturally related career in the areas of technology, education, leadership development, and/or mental health.

**"Farm and Food" Scholarships (up to \$2,500)** – College scholarships will go to other qualified applicants pursuing agriculturally related careers. (last year, 7 were provided)

Applications are now being accepted.

In addition to the "Farm and Food" Agriculture Scholarships, there are other scholarship opportunities available as shown below.

[Other scholarship opportunities available...](#)

If you're looking to pursue one of the many careers available in the agriculture industry, Cook County Farm Bureau can help!

**"Moving Ag Forward" Vocational Ag Career Training (available in three cycles in 2024/2025)** – These scholarships have been designed for individuals and Cook County Farm Bureau members pursuing training in agriculturally related skills including tractor/truck diesel mechanics, CDL for crop, food and livestock hauling, welding, agricultural technology, etc. (Application window open now)

**Adult Scholarships (availability based on training sessions and acceptance)** – Scholarships for Cook County Farm Bureau members include tuition assistance for

- Master Urban Farmer training and certification
  - Master Gardener training and certification
  - Illinois Ag Leadership Program (IALP) training program
  - Ag Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT) training program
- (Application window open now)

## Agricultural Careers

PLANT SCIENCE



ANIMAL SCIENCES



AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



FOOD SCIENCES



To apply for a CCFB Foundation Scholarship, scan the QR code

**Mental Health Training Expense Reimbursement** – Mental Health Professionals or Cook County Farm Bureau members seeking to assist farmers and the rural community who attend and participate in mental health/suicide prevention training seminars, conferences, or educational sessions may be eligible for support and reimbursement. Contact the Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation at 708-354-3276 or email [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org). (Available throughout the year)

**Visit [www.cookcfb.org/foundation](http://www.cookcfb.org/foundation) for more information on these scholarships and to apply.**



## MASTER MEMBER CLUB FOR 2024

Karen Biernacki, Gerry Kopping, Ruth Zeldenrust and Janet McCabe were re-inducted into the Cook County Farm Bureau Master Member Club for 2024. Kopping achieved top point status by signing up five voting members.

Membership into the Club is accomplished by earning points by recruiting and reinstating voting and associate members during the year. Each received a gift card, and their names will be added to a wall display in the Cook County Farm Bureau boardroom.



## CCFB VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2024

Mr. Luke Allen was presented the Volunteer of the Year by President Janet McCabe as a result of his volunteer participation and leadership provided through the Ag Literacy Team, Gala emcee and Ag Education. The nominators' application said " Luke has provided support, mentorship and expertise to the Cook County Farm Bureau Ag Literacy Team, actively supporting CCFB programs to achieve our mission and vision for the Ag community, Ag Literacy and beyond...Luke single-handedly planned and FFA national convention bus trip to bring students from Cook County who did not have transportation and would not have otherwise been able to attend".

# HOW FARM BUREAU SERVED YOU IN DECEMBER

- ▶ Engaged with Cook County Commissioners to further Farm Bureau's relationship with them and members of their staff.
- ▶ Assisted members in completing their 2025 County Farmland Assessment applications.
- ▶ Connected members to local member ag businesses for the purchase Christmas trees, wreaths, poinsettias, and more to Deck their Halls through promotions and ShopLocal.
- ▶ Provided members with discounts and savings events and benefits for holiday gift giving.



## Gratitude Journal

Each month, there are people that go out of their way to lend a hand to help with our cause in many ways, both big and small. We appreciate it greatly!

### The Cook County Farm Bureau thanks...

- Board members Janet McCabe, Gerry Kopping, Ruth Zeldenrust, Dan Biernacki, Jim Bloomstrand, Blake Lanphier, Mike Rauch, Greg Stack, and Mark Yunker who dedicated time and services to help craft the direction of the Illinois Farm Bureau® during the 2024 Illinois Agricultural Association® Annual Meeting in December on the delegate floor and through conversations with Farm Bureau members across the state.
- The Country Financial agents and staff who continue to support the Cook County Farm Bureau.
- Blake Lanphier, Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader, who represented the organization so very well during the statewide discussion meet.
- Members British Griffis, Jonathan Poole, Katrina Milton and Kayla Biegel for interviewing and being selected to participate in the Agriculture Leaders of Tomorrow program offered by the Illinois Farm Bureau.
- The many Voting and Associate members who have renewed their memberships for 2025!
- Members that have donated end of year funds to the Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation.

## Co-Operator

Published Monthly  
**Cook County Farm Bureau**  
 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525  
 (ph) 708-354-3276 (fax) 708-579-6056  
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USPS No 132180 Periodical Postage Paid at LaGrange, IL 60525 & additional mailing office

<b>Editor</b> Bob Rohrer	<b>Copy Analyst</b> Ashley Christensen	<b>Copy Development</b> CCFB Office Staff
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Janet McCabe, President  
 Gerry Kopping, Vice President  
 Ruth Zeldenrust, Secretary-Treasurer

Dan Biernacki	Roger Freeman
Mike Rauch	Todd Price
James Bloomstrand	Greg Stack
Patrick Horcher	Blake Lanphier
Mark Yunker	

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Bob Rohrer

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### Postmaster - Mail Form 3579 to 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525

"Co-Operator" (USPS No 132180) is published monthly as a membership publication for \$2.50 per year to members as a part of their annual membership dues by Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525. Periodical postage paid at LaGrange, IL and additional mailing office. Postmaster: send address changes to the Co-Operator, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525.

The Co-Operator, the monthly publication of the Cook County Farm Bureau®, is available to members through mail delivery, email, or by viewing online at www.cookcfb.org. Members that wish to receive the publication solely by email can let us know by sending an email to fbcooperator@gmail.com with the subject: E-Cooperator.



# Downwind

by **BOB ROHRER, CCFB MANAGER**



## An “Associate Member Calling Contest”

On the farm, hog calling was a “thing” for us. We used “the call” when feeding and checking on the pasture hogs. I would yell out “Suey, Suey... Here pig, here pig, here pig”. Those pigs would come running across the fields. I’m pretty sure it was not my melodic voice that drew them in because there was pig food involved.

Hog Calling competitions at State Fairs became popular and soon after, the “Husband Calling Contest” appeared starring some wives with really loud voices and unique styles. Husbands come running across the fields because there is food involved?

I was thinking about these concepts as we consider the retention of associate members in the year 2025.

I’m not sure what an “Associate Member Calling Contest” would look like but I’m willing to give it a try!

If I had a blow horn, I would shout this call...

*YOU ARE AWESOME  
YOU ARE AWESOME  
STAY WITH US*

*Please - STAY WITH US!*

There is food involved! Associate members help us support our mission by supporting great farmers and quality food, fiber, fuel and fun. Cook County Farm Bureau associate members support great food by being members. Our associate members surround us...

- teachers
- small business owners
- students
- mechanics
- salespersons
- truck drivers
- moms and dads
- waiters and bartenders
- construction workers
- lawyers
- office workers
- friends and neighbors

- People with a fondness and appreciation for farming and food
  - Those individuals seeking the benefits and services
- An associate member is Everyone (except a farmer)! We know that people join the Cook County Farm Bureau as an associate member for a multitude of reasons including:

- To support the work that farmers do every day by putting food on the table.
- To know more about this great industry called agriculture, locally and in the United States
- To access our wonderful IAA Credit Union for financial services
- For discount pricing on soil tests, entertainment tickets, farm connected experiences
- For programming focused on the needs people have today... Financial, social, entertainment, resource

A large number of our associate members have

joined Cook County Farm Bureau due to interest in accessing our wonderful affiliated insurance company, Country Financial. The demand for access to the Company by non- farmers has expanded exponentially throughout the 100 years of Country Financials’ existence.

The result: Cook County Farm Bureau is the largest County Farm Bureau in the country by virtue of the sizable number of associate members that have joined us.

However, change is a constant. The latest membership change may impact some of our associate members. Effective January 1, 2025, the underwriting requirement for an associate member to access the preferred property-casualty companies of Country Financial has been discontinued. This gives

Country Financial clients the opportunity to decide about continuing as an associate membership in Cook County Farm Bureau moving forward. We know that many, if not most, associate members will continue their membership, and we thank you!

My ask (or “Associate Member Call”): Please stay with us... Please renew your membership when you receive your renewal notice in 2025 for all of the reasons previously mentioned. If you are interested in renewing at this very moment (while you are thinking about it), use the QR code below.

And, I am confident there is no other County Farm Bureau in the universe that has created an Associate Member “Call”. Please know, if you renew your membership, we won’t have to use it on you!



## If you need a few more WHYs to remain an A Member?

- Where else will you hear me make fun of myself through Downwind each month in your mailbox (physical or electronic)?
- Where else will you hear/read about the latest in food and farm news?
- Where else will you receive access to the great experiences and events that have made us famous?
- Where else will you receive Ag Adventures for Families?
- Ag Literacy for you and your family...we bring it everyday!
- Humor...we have it. Serious topics...that’s us too!
- ILFB Partners magazine – a great benefit on farming, facts and travel across the state
- Discounts and benefits – we offer access to over 300,000 local, state and national!
- Bonus, call the office and “we actually answer the phone”. Yes, we are real people!
- But wait, there’s more! [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org)

Obviously, value proposition remains huge!

## Recipe of the Month



### Hot Honey Chicken Meatballs

Cook DuPage Beekeepers Assoc News

#### INGREDIENTS:

##### Meatballs:

- 1 lb ground chicken
- ½ c breadcrumbs
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 t Korean chili pepper flakes
- 1 t kosher salt
- Scallions, sliced for garnish

##### Hot Honey:

- ½ c local fresh honey
- 2 T apple cider vinegar
- 1 t crushed red pepper flakes

#### DIRECTIONS:

Preheat air fryer to 380°. In a medium bowl, mix together ground chicken, breadcrumbs, egg, chili pepper, and salt. Make 16 – 1-inch meatballs and place in air fryer. Cook for 8-10 minutes, shaking halfway through cooking time. While the meatballs are cooking, combine honey, vinegar, and red pepper in a microwave safe dish and heat for approximately 1½ minutes. Yields 16 1-inch meatballs. You can also bake in the oven on a sheet pan at 375° for 10-12 minutes.

Tip: Dip your fingers in cold water as you roll meatballs, to make it easier!

For more fresh recipes from our collections, go to: <https://cookcfb.org/discover-local/community/recipes>



## 2024 Recipe Collection is Still Available!

To receive a copy of the 2024 Recipe Collection Booklet, email: [membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org](mailto:membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org), call 708-354-3276 or register from the MyIFB member center account.



# Cook County Farm Bureau 2024 Year in Review

The year 2024 featured plenty of “moments and headlines” for members and the organization. The Cook County Farm Bureau is proud to have provided another year full of service in 2024 to members. Here’s a brief recap of some the highlights...

## JANUARY

- The organization mourned the passing of Mr. Jim Gutzmer, long time director and past president, as well as the passing of member and former Women’s Committee member, Emily Stelter.
- We celebrated member Steve Archer’s recognition as Farmer Veteran of the Year presented at the Illinois Specialty Growers’ “Everything Local Conference.”



## FEBRUARY

- Farm Bureau sponsored a Zoom Book Club in 2024, participants engaged in conversations regarding generation’s relationship with food, cooking, and agriculture. The 2025 Zoom Book Club will begin in late January for interested members.

## MARCH



- Wayne Kolweier, AITC Presenter, taught Prospect High school freshmen that food does not originate from the grocery store and that farms are the source.



- COUNTRY Financial® representatives and Cook County Farm Bureau® leaders donated fresh and non-perishable food items to the Schaumburg Barn as part of this year’s Food Checkout Day. The Schaumburg Barn serves seniors and individuals with disabilities. The Schaumburg Barn was selected by Chicago Northwest COUNTRY Financial Representatives.

- Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leaders Committee hosted a hygiene product drive in conjunction with Food Checkout Day.



- Cook County Farm Bureau was saddened with the passing of long-time director, Michael Horcher.

## APRIL



- At Ag Day north, Special Education Consultant Vivian Palicki, along with Illinois Bee Rescue, taught about bees, pollination, and honey production held April 17 at Historic Wagner Farm in Glenview.

## MAY



- Lt. Governor Julianna Stratton joined Cook County Farm Bureau members, Michael Howard (pictured center) and Ameila Howard (pictured right) in Springfield.

## JUNE



- Cook County farmer and Farm Bureau member Natacha Nicholes (sitting on her heels) visited with zoo goers during Cook County Farm Bureau’s pollinator partnership with Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago.

## JULY

- Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leaders hosted and participated in a variety of activities including Young Leader Conference, hosting a hygiene product drive for families in need, a summer outing to Top Golf, participating in the District and State Discussion Meet, and hosting a virtual discussion with Wake County (North Carolina) Young Farmers. The Young Leader Committee is open to leaders ages 18-35 who are interested in agriculture.

- Carmen Trotta, the recipient of CCFB’s Howard Paarlberg Excellence in Agriculture Scholarship, chooses the winning 50/50 raffle ticket with Bona Heinsohn, CCFB staff, and Luke Allen, Emcee. The raffle was won by Cathy Leahy.



- Cook County Farm Bureau along with partners engaged in a Field Days program focused on specialty growers and those interested in composting and nutrient reuse as part of the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy. In addition to the Field Days, the Farm Bureau also sponsored struvite (phosphorus source) research on specialty crop fields in Cook County.



- Respond Now Community Garden is a much-needed green space nestled in the center of a blighted cross street in Chicago Heights. This food production garden supports the attached organization’s food pantry Food Pantry, serving many local families with fresh produce including collard greens, tomatoes, peppers, herbs, squash, and more.

## AUGUST



- Cook County Farm Bureau board member Todd Price pulled a hayrack float down King Dr. in Chicago to showcase urban agriculture at the Bud Billiken parade. Cook County Farm Bureau help sponsor the float along with other Illinois Agri-Food Alliance collaborators.
- Farm Bureau worked with the Cook County Assessor’s Office to revise and modernize the annual farmland affidavit, which is required for property owners to receive the special tax designation. While modernizing and simplifying the tax designation process is beneficial to all farmers, the reduction in minimum acreage benefits primarily urban and small-scale farmers within Cook County.
- Cook County leadership and staff and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District staff toured Windy City Mushroom in the Ford City neighborhood of Chicago as part of this year’s Cook County Idea Exchange.

## SEPTEMBER



- The results from the August Farm Crawl for consumers were provided to members. Zach Grant and Sarah Batka, University of Illinois small farm educators in Cook County, showed the South Suburban Cook Farm in Matteson as a part of the 2024 farm crawl sponsored by the Commodities/Marketing team.

- Cook CFB has been working in partnership with Lee County Farm Bureau (Lee CFB), IFB, and Niles Township to convert wasted green space owned by Niles Township into a pollinator rain garden. This garden will increase pollinator habitat in northern Cook County.

- Resolution 24-0817 supported urban agriculture and called on other local units of government to apply for Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) programs to expand and support urban agriculture opportunities. Resolution 24-0817 was an initiative of Cook CFB intended to expand urban agriculture opportunities in Cook County.

## OCTOBER



- The 24th Giant Pumpkin and Local Honey Contest was held with member Mark Mourlas bringing in a record pumpkin of 1,424 lbs.

## NOVEMBER

- 27 people attended Cook County Farm Bureau’s HOLIDAY Barn Quilt Painting event. The attendees learned about barn quilt designs and were able to create and paint their own barn quilt pattern to hang or display indoors. Barn quilts, which are designed using quilt block patterns, are typically painted and displayed on the side of a barn or other structure.
- Congressman Sean Casten (6th district) joined the Biernacki family at their Tinley Park Greenhouse, Ted’s Greenhouse, for a tour and discussion about farming and the greenhouse industry in Cook County and Illinois.



## DECEMBER

- The Cook County Farm Bureau was recognized at the Illinois Farm Bureau annual meeting with many awards including the Pinnacle Award for top County Farm Bureaus and the New Horizon Award for County Farm Bureau’s new and innovative projects (Future Forward initiative).



## OTHER:

- The Shop Local Directory, published in May (available through the Cook County Farm Bureau website), expanded for better information and to allow local agricultural businesses to conduct e-commerce through it.
- The Master Gardener Resource Center and help desk served members from April through November by providing advice regarding soil test results, soil amendments, growing plants guidance, and researching related issues.
- Connected over 28,629 local students with food and farming through our Agricultural Literacy/Ag in the Classroom program. In addition to in-school programming, Farm Bureau offered numerous educational opportunities for teachers, administrators, and parents.
- Provided college-aged students pursuing agricultural or mental health-related degrees with financial support through the Cook County Farm Bureau® Foundation. Over \$30,000 was provided to Cook County students.

# CCFB Makes Impact at 2024 IFB Annual Meeting

Cook County Farm Bureau is coming off of a very successful year that culminated in the Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting held December 7-9 in Chicago. During the meeting, Cook County Farm Bureau leaders were involved in many ways and received many awards and recognitions.

During the delegate session, Cook County Farm Bureau submitted a substantial Policy Resolution on "food labels" that was adopted by the 331 IFB delegates and will be used across the state to strengthen consumer trust, information, and reduction of waste related to food. Throughout the day, Cook County Farm Bureau Leaders helped develop policy for the Illinois Farm Bureau in 2025.



(L to R) Gerald Kopping, Ruth Zeldenrust, and Janet McCabe served as the delegates representing Cook County Farm Bureau during the Illinois Farm Bureau policy debate at the Annual Meeting in Chicago.

During the General Session on stage, Cook County Farm Bureau was presented the Pinnacle Award for the large County Farm Bureau group for the fourth consecutive year. The Pinnacle award is the highest County Farm Bureau award recognizing complete and well-rounded organizational excellence including goals/ objectives, planning, implementation, and results.

Cook County Farm Bureau was awarded on stage the New Horizon Award which goes to the County Farm Bureau with the most outstanding innovative program for the Board of Director's Future Forward Initiative.

The Cook County Farm Bureau on stage received recognition of County Activity of Excellence awards for:

- Farm Crawl for Consumers (Farm Income and Development category)
- DRIP Membership Value Marketing Campaign (Membership Value category)
- Mental Help Programming (Health and Safety category)



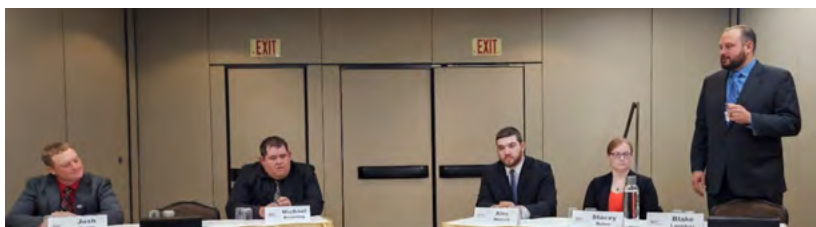
President McCabe with IFB President Brian Duncan with the New Horizon Award in recognition of the Future Forward Initiative.



Lu Ann Matejczak (L), District 5 IFB board member, presented President McCabe a certificate recognizing CCFB for several CAE awards.

Blake Lanphier, Young Leader Chairman, participated in the statewide discussion meet competition with an impressive effort, advancing all the way to the Sweet 16.

CCFB Young Leader, Blake Lanphier, makes a key point on diversification in farming and agriculture during the sweet sixteen round of the statewide discussion meet.



Lanphier makes a closing statement during an opening round robin of the discussion meet on the topic of energy production on the farm and private property rights.



Congressman Brad Schneider (pictured left) visits with Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader Rebecca Biernacki during the Illinois Farm Bureau® Annual Meeting in Chicago. Congressman Schneider was named a "Friend of Agriculture" by ACTIVATOR in 2024 and is a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for tax policy. Biernacki discussed farm economy issues including the cost of inputs, transportation and labor with Congressman Schneider who represents parts of Cook, Lake and McHenry Counties.



"It's always such a joy to spend time with Illinois farmers," Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton told Illinois Farm Bureau delegates during a break in their policy session at Annual Meeting in Chicago. (Photo by Catrina Rawson)



Jim Taylor, RFD Illinois radio (center), interviewed Vice-President Gerry Kopping (L) and President Janet McCabe (R) on the CCFB's Future Forward leadership development initiative during the Annual Meeting. Link: 8:18 Cook County FB: Future Forward.



(L to R) Farm Bureau manager Bob Rohrer and board members Blake Lanphier, Gerald Kopping, Greg Stack, Janet McCabe, Ruth Zeldenrust, Jim Bloomstrand, Dan Biernacki, Mike Rauch, and Mark Yunker led Cook County Farm Bureau's participation at the Illinois Farm Bureau annual meeting in December.



Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader, Jennifer Miller submitted the photo above of her pet parrot, Dr. Pulp, as a part of the Harvest for All fundraiser conducted by the Illinois Farm Bureau statewide Young Leaders Committee at the Annual Meeting. "Pulp the destroyer vs Illinois Harvest" was voted the winner of the contest!

Cook County Farm Bureau member, Rick Homerdig, poses beside a milk can that he painted. The CCFB Board commissioned him to make and finish the milk can as a donation for the Illinois Farm Bureau Foundation silent auction during the IAA Annual Meeting in December. The donation raised over \$200.



# Planting Seeds

## In the Winter



**Katrina J.E. Milton**

I recently saw a TikTok video where a woman was explaining why she doesn't eat hamburgers: "because hamburgers come from pork." I also saw an Instagram Reel that had a young man explain that chocolate milk comes from brown cows and strawberry milk comes from cows that eat strawberries.

Maybe the videos were fake and created for likes and shares, but maybe I'm being optimistic. Maybe they really don't have any idea where their food comes from.

When I ask students where their food comes from, the first answer is usually "the grocery store." I coax them a little, asking where their food was before the store. After thinking for a few seconds, they mention a farm, but usually only after questioning and waiting for a response.

Our Ag in the Classroom (AITC) presentation "There's Ag on MyPlate" teaches students that every aspect of their plate, including dairy, grains, vegetables, fruit, and protein, comes from agriculture. Our AITC presenters explain how wheat becomes flour with a hand-threshing activity with wheat grown in Cook County by Farm Bureau Board President Janet

McCabe. They learn that all ingredients in a pizza, including wheat, cheese, tomatoes, and toppings, are from agriculture. They also learn how much added sugar is in the food they eat by counting out teaspoons correlating to grams, shocked and amazed to learn that one can of Coca-Cola has nearly 10 teaspoons of sugar in it.

For some (I hope most!), connecting hamburgers to beef cattle is easy. However, tracing the origin of your Flamin' Hot Cheetos can be a little more difficult (they're made from corn and dairy, among other ingredients).

I love looking at ingredient lists and researching all the steps it takes to bring that item from farm to my table. I think that most people accept the food for the item it is: a hamburger, chicken nuggets, pizza, or Flamin' Hot Cheetos.

That's why Ag in the Classroom is so important. Our programs teach not only where your food comes from, but all of the careers, science, and technology involved in the process.

Last school year, our AITC program saw 28,629 students in 1,261 classrooms in 239 schools. Our educational presentations would not be possible without our eight wonderful presenters: Barbara Bhojraj, Jim Bloomstrand, Mike Galassini, Wayne

By Katrina J.E. Milton, Director of Ag Literacy

Kolweier, Sarah Koukol, Kathy Lesser, Kathy Martz, and Betsy Yager. Our scheduling would not be as seamless, and our presentations not as creative, colorful, or fun, without the help of AITC Assistant Jill Drover. Our program would not be presented in schools unless teachers, school counselors, principals, and curriculum coordinators found the value in agricultural education and wanted to share the importance of knowing where their food comes from with their students.

As a member of Illinois Farm Bureau and Cook County Farm Bureau, a portion of your dues helps support Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom and the Cook County Farm Bureau AITC program. Thank YOU for supporting agricultural education for Cook County youth. Our educational efforts and hands-on learning would not be possible without your support.

For more information about Cook County Farm Bureau and our Ag in the Classroom Program, visit [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org). To schedule a presentation for your school, visit <https://bit.ly/AITCplease>.

Katrina can be reached at [aitc@cookcfb.org](mailto:aitc@cookcfb.org).



## Thank You

Ag in the Classroom Presenter Betsy Yager received this thank you note from Nicolas, a fourth grade student from MacArthur International Spanish Academy in Hoffman Estates. He writes "Dear Mrs. Yager, Thank you for telling me something new and now I love that I am a Mexican farmer and now I am proud of my culture.

Thank you. From: Nicolas."



## IAITC Presentations

Ag in the Classroom Presenter Wayne Kolweier shows students at Avondale-Logandale Elementary School in Chicago how wheat kernels are ground to make flour as part of our There's Ag on MyPlate presentation.

Our Ag in the Classroom program offers free, hands-on presentations in schools. If you are interested in agricultural education, visit [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org) or email [aitc@cookcfb.org](mailto:aitc@cookcfb.org). If you are a teacher and would like to schedule our program, visit <https://bit.ly/AITCplease>.



# COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION'S / OUTSTANDING IN THEIR FIELD Ag Student of the Month

**JANUARY:**

**JAKIRA CARTER**

**Grade:** 12

**School:** Chicago Vocational High School

**Involvement in Agricultural Groups:** JaKira is Chicago Vocational High School's FFA chapter president.

**Involvement in Ag:** JaKira a distinguished student in her horticulture class. She monitors and tracks the water quality of the hydroponics and aquaponic growing environment, assists with teaching students plant propagation, and fills in when students are absent to complete their job duties. Additionally, she owns a pen business and keeps her Agricultural Experience Tracker FFA record book current. This year, she is

expanding her student enterprise to make aloe soap. Her partner is a diverse learner. When his original partner transferred, JaKira stepped up and learned how to make the soap so that she could assist him.

**Words from the Nominator:** "She is dedicated, has a strong work ethic, and is willing to help others. She motivates me and other students to participate in activities, including the Illinois and National FFA Conventions."

~ Joyce Stackhouse, Agriculture Teacher/FFA Advisor

**Plans for the Future:** JaKira hopes to become an entrepreneur floral designer/event planner.

# AGRICULTURE ADVENTURES FOR FAMILIES



## JANUARY AG ADVENTURE: POPCORN National Popcorn Day is January 19!

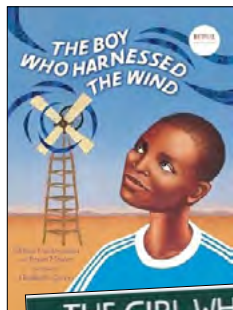
### Cook County Connection: Garrett Popcorn

Garrett Popcorn Shops started in Chicago in 1949 and now has locations in nine countries, including shops on the Magnificent Mile and in O'Hare International Airport.

Founder Gladys Otto Garrett opened her first popcorn shop at 10 West Madison in downtown Chicago using her family's secret recipes. The shop sold CaramelCrisp, CheeseCorn, Buttery, and Plain popcorn, as well as homemade fudge and roasted nuts.

According to Garrett Popcorn Shop's website, the "Chicago Mix" of CaramelCrisp and CheeseCorn popcorn became an official menu item in 1977. Customers would request an empty bag so they could mix the two flavors together.

Grab your popcorn and watch an inspiring ag-accurate movie, paired with a children's book.



### The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind

Inspired by a science book, a 13-year-old boy in Malawi builds a wind turbine to save his village from famine.

Watch on Netflix.

Read the children's book "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer, illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon.



### Temple Grandin

A biopic about an autistic woman whose innovations revolutionized practices for the humane handling of livestock.

Watch on HBO Max.

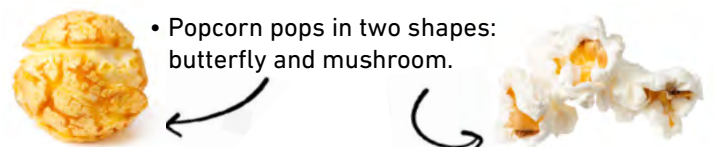
Read the children's book "The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin" by Julia Finley Mosca, illustrated by Daniel Rieley.



From www.popcorn.org

## Fun Facts about Popcorn

- Americans consume 14 billion quarts of popcorn each year on average, based on 2016-2020 sales.
- Popcorn differs from other types of maize/corn in that it has a thicker pericarp/hull. The hull allows pressure from the heated water to build and eventually bursts open. The inside starch becomes gelatinous while being heated; when the hull bursts, the gelatinized starch spills out and cools, giving it its familiar popcorn shape.
- Popcorn kernels can pop three feet into the air.
- Popcorn is Illinois' state snack.
- Popcorn needs between 13.5-14% moisture to pop.



- Popcorn pops in two shapes: butterfly and mushroom.
- The Popcorn Board, a leading authority on all things popcorn, is located in Chicago.
- Unlike other treats, popcorn became more popular during the Great Depression, partly due to the fact movie theaters began selling it.
- Popcorn went into a slump during the early 1950s, when television became popular. Attendance at movie theaters dropped and with it, popcorn consumption.
- Popcorn sales picked back up with microwavable popcorn in the early 1980's. Most microwaves today have a popcorn button.

## January Word Search

Last Month's Winner:  
**Rolf Moan**

Air	G	P	S	Y	E	P	A	Z	S	E	T	M	J	L	C
Chicago	A	O	C	L	B	G	O	M	O	V	I	E	T	D	O
Garrett	R	P	Z	H	E	H	G	P	F	A	V	X	B	Z	E
Heat	R	U	K	J	I	N	B	U	C	W	D	B	T	R	R
Hull	E	L	D	X	W	C	R	R	C	O	K	G	U	M	S
Kernels	T	A	L	J	D	V	A	E	A	R	R	T	E	H	C
Microwave	T	R	W	B	E	T	M	G	K	C	S	N	A	H	V
Moisture	E	N	J	N	Q	T	R	T	O	I	U	P	E	I	R
Movie	C	J	T	X	P	A	K	N	O	M	E	A	J	E	E
Popcorn	H	X	P	D	A	E	F	M	R	G	T	X	T	G	V
Popular	J	C	S	L	T	R	C	G	Y	Q	L	A	T	C	X
Shape	P	X	R	B	F	T	K	A	I	R	W	E	Y	D	N
Snack	Z	D	S	A	R	C	M	C	F	B	R	U	G	Q	D
Starch	L	L	U	H	T	Z	V	O	H	F	K	L	J	G	T
Treat	T	U	L	M	D	S	K	C	A	N	S	A	N	Y	H
Water															

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

Choose Your Prize Preference for If You Win:

*If a choice is not made, movie tickets will be sent*

Beggar's Pizza Gift Card     3 Movie Tickets

Delta Sonic Car Wash    *(Choose one option only)*

Located on front of paper

### Choose Your Prize: Word Search

Choices include a \$25 Beggar's Pizza Gift Card, Delta Sonic Car Wash (Super Kiss Wash and \*10-min Interior Cleaning) OR \*\*3 AMC Movie Tickets

\*Additional charge will apply when using Interior cleaning for Full-sized Vehicles

\*\*AMC Yellow tickets not valid in California, New York, & New Jersey.

Complete the Word Search puzzle for your chance to win! Winners will be contacted by mail.

**MAIL TO:**  
Cook Co. Farm Bureau  
Ag Adventures Word Search  
6438 Joliet Rd  
Countryside, IL 60525

**FAX TO:** 708-579-6056

**EMAIL TO:** FBcooperator@gmail.com

Complete and submit an entry every month all in 2024 and your name is automatically entered into an "End of Year" drawing for a gift basket full of ag themed goodies.

**Deadline is the 20th of each month. GOOD LUCK!**

# At The Farm Gate

by Joanie Stiers



## Meals Blanket Us in Comfort

Mom made even the best of days better when she set a pot of homemade beef stew with dumplings in the middle of the table. This repurposed meal of my childhood rated more delicious than the roast beef supper she prepared the night before. The aroma hugged you upon walking in the door. And to this day, this main course dishes out as much happiness to my soul as beefy vegetable goodness to my taste buds.

Comfort foods seem magical, and as a parent, I attempt to replicate the magic with Swedish meatballs, pizza casserole and fresh-baked rolls with home-preserved jams. Certain foods make us feel good as they satisfy our needs, and the farm women and church ladies before me set flavor standards and meal-time priorities that we embrace.

Throughout the winter, we find

fulfillment in family-recipe cinnamon rolls and homemade meals of chicken noodle soup, chicken pesto pasta, burgundy pork tenderloin, pulled beef and meatloaf with farm-raised beef from the freezer. Every cool-weather holiday includes my mother-in-law's dressing recipe, and at family parties, I attempt to mimic my late aunt's deviled eggs given we own hens that supply the main ingredient.

My adulthood favorite home-cooked meal of chicken pot pie makes the menu once per year on a quiet Saturday. After the meal that took most of the day to prepare, I scrape every bit of residue from my personal ramekin with a spoon. While a decibel less annoying than fingernails on a chalkboard, I figure it's more polite than licking the bowl.

At Christmas, a cousin met requests for my late aunt's raspberry dessert. A neighbor's recipe for pizza stromboli has evolved into an interactive, meal-making memory for our family on

Christmas Eve. And with Midwestern tradition, our farm family places Granny's four-layer "salad" next to the lettuce salad in the potluck line because it contains Jell-O. The "salad" also has whipped topping; nonetheless, we enjoy it with the main course and still leave room for dessert.

During the fall harvest, the anticipation of a hot evening meal is real. Mom's field-side meal deliveries stop combines, trucks and tractors temporarily for the operators to grab their daily dose on a long workday. Mom prepares her classics like barbecued meatballs and taco casserole. She adds a sweet treat often credited to a church lady's recipe in one of the United Methodist cookbooks, further proof that legacies live on through the foods that comfort us.

*About the author: Joanie Stiers farms with her family in West Central Illinois, where they raise corn, soybeans, hay, beef cattle, backyard chickens and farmkids.*

## 2025 Farmland Questionnaire/ Affidavit NOW AVAILABLE

The 2025 Farmland Questionnaire/Affidavit for Cook County is now available online. The filing deadline date is January 31, 2025. The Questionnaire/Affidavit must be completed online, paper copies will not be accepted.

The 2025 Farmland Questionnaire/Affidavit is available at: <https://www.cookcountyassessor.com/farmlandaffidavit>

### As a Reminder to Farmer members:

Cook County assesses a property according to its "Assessment Class" as defined under the Cook County Code of Ordinances. (see Art. II - Chapter 74 Sec. 74-63) If the real estate is used as a "farm", it will be classified as a Class 2 property. Currently, Class 2-39 real estate is defined as "Non-equalized land under agricultural use, valued at farm pricing". An improvement on real estate used as a "farm" can receive a Class 2-24 defined as a "Farm Building".

In determining whether real estate meets the definition of a "farm" under the Cook County Code of Ordinances, the CCAO uses the definition of a "Farm" found in the Illinois Property Tax Code. 35 ILCS 200/1-60 Farm. Section 1-60. In addition, the CCAO follows the guidance of the Illinois Department of Revenue in classifying and assessing farmland. Publication 122 - Instructions for Farmland Assessments - is published annually and contains important information regarding specific situations pertaining to types of land and improvements to the land. A recent copy of Publication 122 can be downloaded at the website above. Also, you can access the CCAO Farmland Eligibility Bulletin there.

In order for a "farm", as defined in Section 1-60 of the Property Code, to receive farmland pricing for the requested year, it must have been farmed for the two (2) preceding years. See 30 ILCS 200/10-110. Further, the property must be used for farming in the year the owner is seeking the class change to farmland status.

### Applying for a class change to preferential farmland assessment:

- Complete the Farmland Application by January 31.
- Upload your documentation to establish your farming activities for the current year and the two preceding years. See list below of required documentation.
- Once your application is submitted, you should receive a confirmation from the CCAO that the application is under review. Once the review is completed, you should receive notification from the CCAO that your class change to farmland has been approved/rejected.


### Required Documentation:

- Any tax forms or documents filed with federal, state, or local government entities showing the income, if any, derived from farming activities.
- Any insurance policies covering farm related activities.
- Dated, color photos of any farming operation(s) you are using as a basis for your request for a class change.
- Any leases, rental agreement or other documentation supporting your farming operation(s).
- Any contracts, sales agreements and/or other documentation supporting your farming operation for the current year and prior two years of operation.
- Invoices for seed, crop yield reports, livestock records, soil sampling, etc.

Information available at <https://www.cookcountyassessor.com/farms>

Cook County Farm Bureau has worked with the Cook County Assessor's Office to revise and modernize the annual farmland affidavit. In addition, Farm Bureau has also worked to ensure that the information regarding the special tax designation process is readily available to farmers seeking the designation.

Join Cook County Farm Bureau® in Supporting Local Families and Food Pantries





# Food CHECKOUT Day

2025

In celebration of the healthy and nutritious food grown and raised by local farmers, Cook County Farm Bureau® members and partners are supporting local families and food pantries.

### FOOD DRIVE

**CASH OR NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS**

NEEDED BY MAR. 4

The year 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of Food Checkout Day and Cook County Farm Bureau's latest effort to support local families in need.

Farm Bureau members who wish to provide a cash donation to a local food pantry are asked to complete the form below. Members are welcome to designate which of the partner food pantries their donation is for.

**PARTNER FOOD PANTRIES ARE:**

**VKMI Hattie B. Williams Food Pantry** in Oak Forest serves south suburban Cook County. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and its lasting effects on food insecurity the pantry served between 50 and 60 families per week; however, that number continues to increase. From January through June of 2024, the Greater Chicago Food Depository's network of food pantries and grocery programs averaged more than 200,000 household visits each month, an increase of more than 24% compared to the same period in 2023.

**Maine Township Food Pantry** in Park Ridge serves the residents of Maine Township, which includes families residing in Des Plaines, Glenview, Niles, Morton Grove, Park Ridge, and Rosemont. Maine Township Food Pantry has been serving residents since 1981.

### HYGIENE PRODUCT DRIVE

**HOSTED BY YOUNG LEADERS**

NEEDED BY MAR. 4

**Young Leaders to Host a Hygiene Product Drive as Part of Food Checkout Day**

Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leaders Committee are asking members to "buy one extra" when they're shopping for personal care items this year.

Common personal care items of need include soap, shampoo/conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, dental floss, and baby care items.

**THESE ITEMS CAN BE DROPPED OFF AT THREE LOCATIONS IN COOK COUNTY:**

- **Farm Bureau office** at 6438 Joliet Road in Countryside
- **Wagner Farm** at 1510 Wagner Road in Glenview
- **Ted's Greenhouse** at 16930 84th Avenue in Tinley Park

If you'd prefer to donate cash, please indicate if the cash is for food or hygiene items. Donations can be made by credit card by calling the Farm Bureau office at 708-354-3276 or by mailing in the form below with a check.  
 Donations will be accepted until March 4, 2025.

**FOOD CHECKOUT DAY 2025 | FOOD PANTRY DONATION**

Food Pantry Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if you'd like your donation to be designated to the Young Leader Hygiene Product Drive: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Cook County Farm Bureau. Checks should be mailed to Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525.

All proceeds will be donated to Cook County food pantries. Donations will be accepted until March 4, 2025.

# Manifolds, Manolos, and Manure

By Bona Heinsohn, CAE  
CCFB Director of Gov. Affairs and Public Relations



**Bona Heinsohn**

Located within the confines of Cook County, Chicago boasts a population of just over 2.6 million residents. Cook County on the other hand is home to slightly more than 5 million residents. Both Chicago and Cook County are in the midst of a population decline.

Chicago and its financial situation have a tremendous

impact on the entire county. In early November, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson called for a \$300 million property tax increase to balance the city's budget. Under his proposal, the average homeowner would likely see a 4.8 percent tax increase.

The mayor's proposal broke his campaign promise and empowered aldermen to wrestle the budget process back from the mayor who has traditionally controlled and directed the entire process. In a rare 50-0 vote, aldermen voted overwhelmingly against the \$300 million property tax increase. The mayor took the vote in stride calling it all part of a healthy process.

Perhaps the vote was more than just part of the budget process and instead signaled a much deeper issue. According to veteran City Hall reporter Fran Spielman, the vote may mean that alderman felt empowered to reclaim the budget process as the mayor's approval ratings lag.

According to a November poll conducted by Change Research, 15 percent of those surveyed felt favorable towards the mayor. Governor Pritzker on the other hand had a 62 percent favorable rating.

In the same poll, 54 percent of respondents felt that if their aldermen supported a \$150 million property tax increase without prioritizing other options to balance the city budget that they would be much more likely to vote for another candidate. Sixty-six percent of those responding indicated that the mayor was irresponsibly managing Chicago's budget-making process rather than working with the city council to find other solutions. Of those responding to Change Research's poll 42 percent identify as strong Democrats. Overall, 70 percent of those responding identified as Democrat.

Also included in the mayor's budget proposal is \$82.6 billion for Chicago Police Department settlements and court claims. The amount is the same amount that former Mayor Lori Lightfoot used in 2019. However, the amount that the city actually spends is much higher, which critics argue is not transparent budgeting or a balanced budget.

Furthering the situation, is a proposed 45 percent cut to the Office of Constitutional Policing and Reform. While the mayor has said on the record that he is unwilling to lay off employees, under his proposal for this office 37 employees will lose their jobs. The cuts also stymie what progress that's been made on court-ordered consent decree compliance. These employees are directly responsible for compliance. Numerous Chicago civic leaders have sent letters to the mayor expressing their concerns with his proposal.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul voiced his concerns with the mayor's proposal, "I must remind you that the consent decree is not optional," Raoul wrote to the mayor. "The City of Chicago must deliver on its consent decree obligations." (WTTW,

In Five Years, Chicago Has Barely Made Progress on its Court-Ordered Police Reforms. Here's Why. 11/20/2024)

Returning to the Change Research poll for a moment, 45 percent of respondents believe that the city council should take over the budget process if necessary to avoid a shutdown and protect their constituents. Numerous alternatives to a property tax have surfaced. Maintain current youth employment levels rather than adding 2,000 jobs. Scale back staffing to 2020 levels. Increase permit fees for private dumpsters. Tax hemp products. Increased fees on large scale events. Merging redundant programs operated by the county and city like the department of public health or board of elections. And ending pandemic-era programs. As a reminder, a majority of those responding to the poll identified as Democrats and 39 percent of them claim they voted for the mayor in the April 2023 runoff election and 72 percent voted for President Joe Biden in 2020.

On the note of elections, the mayor's race is still several years out but numerous names have surfaced as potential challengers for the mayor. On the list are Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, Comptroller Susana Mendoza, Congressman Mike Quigley, state Representative Kam Buckner, City Clerk Anna Valencia, former Inspector General Joe Ferguson, and city council members Brian Hopkins (2nd), Silvana Tabares (23rd), Bill Conway (34th), Gil Villegas (36th), and Brendan Reilly (42nd).

While policing and the Chicago budget and budget process aren't farming, they do impact Farm Bureau members and Chicago residents. All of which are of interest and important to the Farm Bureau.

## Farm Bureau Food Labeling Policy Approved by Delegates

Illinois Farm Bureau® delegates approved the following policy during the recent Illinois Agricultural Association® Annual Meeting in December:

### Food Labeling

In the United States, more than one-third of food goes to waste annually. This waste is the single largest category of material sent to municipal landfills. Date labels contribute to this problem as they can be confusing to consumers and prompt consumers to throw out food that is still safe to eat. A 2016 Harvard study found that more than 80% of consumers throw away food that is at or near the "date" label at least some of the time.

Standardizing the language on food labels would reduce confusion and improve understanding among consumers. With the exception of baby formula, date labels on food are not federally regulated or standardized.

Consumers are bombarded with all types of expiration date formats, up to 50 different phrases nationwide. Each term can be used to mean different things by different brands, and some expiration dates have no phrase next to them at all.

The policy supports the promotion of nutritional information on food labels; science-based labeling of foods, fibers, and other agricultural products; and science-based labeling policies while also providing labeling requirements for honey, products of the U.S., and protein sources.

The policy will now provide the basis for Farm Bureau's discussions with partners, affiliates, agricultural companies, and legislators.

## Farm Bureau Delegates Fail to Approve Regenerative Agriculture Policy Submittal Instead Opt to Create a Working Group

A single legal or regulatory definition of the term 'regenerative agriculture' does not exist. Equally, a widely accepted definition of the term has not emerged from within the agricultural industry. The absence of clarity around the term 'regenerative agriculture' creates challenges for researchers who seek to study practices and strategies and creates confusion among consumers who may not understand the term.

See the full Submittal at <http://cookcfb.org/ccfb/policy-and-priorities/policies>



### Commissioner Miller Named 'Friend of Farm Bureau'

Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller was named a 2024 'Friend of Farm Bureau' by the Cook County Farm Bureau®. The award celebrates Cook County Commissioners' outstanding voting records on priority issues considered by the county board. Pictured with Commissioner Miller is Farm Bureau staff Bona Heinsohn. This year's award is succulents in a cement planter.

### 'Friend of the Farm Bureau' Bestowed on Commissioner

In recognition of her outstanding voting record on pertinent Farm Bureau issues and matters, Cook County Commissioner Josina Morita was named a 2024 'Friend of the Farm Bureau.' The 'Friend of the Farm Bureau' award was created to recognize Cook County Commissioners who are supportive of farm and small business-related issues. Pictured with Commissioner Morita is Farm Bureau staff Bona Heinsohn.



## THE CO-OPERATOR

The Co-Operator publication has been a Cook County Farm Bureau member staple in the mailboxes of members since the 1930s. We plan on continuing to produce this high-quality publication for members moving forward.

However, as our members know, postage rates continue to increase with delivery issues popping up frequently. Therefore, members interested in receiving the newsletter electronically each month are invited to provide us with a quality email address.

Contact the Cook County Farm Bureau with your email address today!! **Phone: 708-354-3276 • Email: [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org)**

## SNAPSHOT OF MEMBER SAVINGS

Your \$20 annual membership can save you a lot of money throughout the year. Here are just a few of our member benefits and the savings you can receive:

	MEMBER COST/SAVINGS	NON-MEMBER
<b>Ford</b>	\$500 cash reward	Reward: \$0
<b>AMC</b>	\$9.50/ticket	Pays: \$12-\$17
<b>Choice Hotels</b> *Based on \$120/night stay	\$96*	Pays: \$120*
<b>Delta Sonic</b> **Super Kiss Wash	\$13*	Pays: \$22*
<b>Raging Waves</b> ***Based on 2024 pricing	\$27*	Pays: \$59*
<b>Great Wolf Lodge</b> *Based on \$249/night stay	\$217*	Pays: \$249*
<b>Grainger</b>	Discounted pricing & free shipping	Pays full price

There are MANY MORE member benefits that you, as a member, have access to! These are just a few of our most popular benefits. Your membership pays for itself after one use! Be sure to take advantage of your membership by using our membership platform/Abenity app or website. Visit: <http://ilfb.abenity.com>. Visit [FordRecognizesu.com](http://FordRecognizesu.com).

## Programs, Workshops and Webinars

### Beginning Beekeeping in Person 2025



Beekeeping for those interested and never kept bees and beekeepers looking to learn and overcome challenges of bee loss and keeping bees sustainably.

**LOCATION:** Cook County Farm Bureau | 6438 Joliet Rd, Countryside – Lower-Level Meeting Room

**DATE:** Saturday & Sunday, March 1-2, 2025 **TIME:** 9:30 am-3:30 pm

**COST:** \$125.00 for members of CCFB or CDBA. \$150.00 for non-members; ask how to join!

**REGISTRATION & PAYMENT:** Registration and payment is required in advance by credit card at 708-354-3276.

### Cheese 101

Presented by Meredith Meder, ACS CCP

We will talk, eat and discuss different milk types, cheese styles and how to buy, cut and store cheeses. This class is ideal for a novice or if you just love cheese!



**LOCATION:** Cook County Farm Bureau | 6438 Joliet Rd. Countryside – Lower Level Conference Room

**DATE:** Thursday, March 13, 2025 **TIME:** 7:00-8:30 pm

**COST:** \$17.00 for CCFB members, \$20 for non-members

**REGISTRATION:** Registration is required in advance by calling the FB at 708-354-3276.

**FROM FOOD TO FLOWERS EVERYTHING LOCAL**  
THE ILLINOIS FOOD, FARMERS MARKET & SPECIALTY CROP CONFERENCE

**JANUARY 29-31, 2025**  
BANK OF SPRINGFIELD CENTER  
SPRINGFIELD, IL

**REGISTER NOW**

[ON.ILFB.ORG/EVERYTHINGLOCALCFB](http://ON.ILFB.ORG/EVERYTHINGLOCALCFB)

## We'll provide the ride to the 2025 "Everything Local Conference"



Looking to attend the 2025 From Food to Flowers Everything Local Conference? Let us provide the ride. Along with our partners, we are providing a charter bus to the conference.

Pick up date Tues. Jan. 28 departing between noon/1 p.m. (exact time to be determined closer to the date and will depend on the pick-up location)

Return date Fri. Jan. 31 leaving Springfield at 12 p.m.

### Pick-up Locations:

(locations may be combined depending on sign-up)

- College of Lake County Grayslake Campus
- Des Plaines, IL - Trinity Lutheran Church
- Chicago - Comer Youth Center
- Joliet, IL - Will County Farm Bureau Office

Final details will be provided closer to the conference.

**Cost: \$25 donation**  
All registrations donations will be donated to Feeding Illinois and the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

**SPACE IS LIMITED, A WAITING LIST WILL BE MAINTAINED.**

\*\*THE COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU HAS ALLOCATED LIMITED FUNDS TO ASSIST COOK CFB MEMBERS WITH REGISTRATION EXPENSES. FUNDS ARE LIMITED AND IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT BONA VIA EMAIL: [bona@cookcfb.org](mailto:bona@cookcfb.org)

To sign up for Bus Ride only, scan here:



To register for the conference and to secure hotel accommodations, scan here:



## COOK COUNTY Agents of the Month

The Agent of the Month program is designed by COUNTRY® Financial Agency Managers of Cook County to recognize overall Insurance Leaders in Life, Disability, Auto, Home, and Health production during the month. The agent earns the award through efforts to provide quality service to existing and new clients. Listed below are the various agents honored by their agency manager with the Agent of the Month designation.



### \* ILIR NUMANI

has been named Agent of the Month for November 2024 by Vicki Nygren, Agency Manager. Ilir's office is located at 6650 N. Northwest Highway, Ste 200, Chicago, IL. His phone number is 773-631-2909. Ilir has been an Agent with COUNTRY® Financial since April 2005.

Chicago North Agency, Vicki Nygren, Agency Manager



### \*MICHAEL SPADONI

has been named Agent of the Month for November 2024. Mike's office is located at 5003 W 95th St, Oak Lawn, IL. His phone number is 708-425-1825. Mike has been a Financial Representative with COUNTRY® Financial since June 2005.

Orland Park Agency, Cary Tate, Agency Manager



### \* TINO RAMIREZ

has been named Agent of the Month for November 2024. Tino's office is located at 830 E Higgins Rd Ste 111A, Schaumburg, IL. His phone number is 847-891-3937. Tino has been a Financial Representative with COUNTRY® Financial since October 2017.

Chicago Northwest Agency, Kevin Gomes, Agency Manager

\*Indicates that this COUNTRY® Agent is a CCFB Certified Agent. The Cook County Farm Bureau Certified Agent Program is designed to strengthen the partnership and relationship shared by COUNTRY® Financial.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

All ads that we receive for the Co-Operator are also listed on our website at [cookcfb.org/stay-updated/classified-ads](http://cookcfb.org/stay-updated/classified-ads). If you have a photo of the item(s) that you are selling you can email it to us to include it on our 'Classifieds' page on our website only along with your ad.

Email your ad (and photo if you have one) to [fbcooperator@gmail.com](mailto:fbcooperator@gmail.com). Please be sure to include your full name, Farm Bureau number, and phone number. Deadline for Classified ads is the 17th of each month. Any ads submitted after the 17th will appear in the following month's Co-Operator. Members may run up to four non-commercial classified ads annually for free. Any ads submitted after the fourth, will be charged.

If mailing your ad, please mail to: Cook County Farm Bureau, Attention: Classified Ads, 6438 Joliet Rd, Countryside, IL 60525. You can also fax your ad to 708-579-6056.

### FOR SALE

4ft. rounded nail table with light. 4 slide drawers and 4 shelves. Like new, black marbled formica. Asking \$200.00. Call 708-654-2010. Picture available online.

18 position ladder, 16 ft, asking \$150. Call 708-654-2010. Picture available online.

IRIDE electric scooter new. Paid \$1,300 asking \$950. Weight 32 lbs. (base), length 38", width 19.25". Call 708-654-2010. Pictures available online.

MDT snow blower, purchased in 2010, 24" 2 stage, 3 forward gears and 2 reverse. Asking \$250 obo. Buyer must pick up. Call John 847-828-8655 after 1.

Harley Davidson Motorcycle. 2017 excellent condition and extras. Well kept red. All extended warranties included. TriGlide Ultra 1750 engine. Must see. Call 847-297-6807 Mary - no texts.

Tools - many tools for every job. Excellent condition. \*Power\* \*Electrical\* \*Plumbing\*. Willing to sell at one price. Call for details. 847-297-6807. No texts. Ask for Mary.

Commercial New Hone Tru knife sharpener. Price negotiable. Please call for details. 847-297-6807. No texts. Ask for Mary.

2006 Ford F250 4X2 work truck. 135,000 miles. 8' bed with single cab and new tailgate. \$4,500 Firm. Ask for Michael 847-272-0448

### FOR RENT

Horse farm: Modern, nicely remodeled farmhouse perfect for a single person or a couple. Tree shaded lot, barn with three stalls, loft, electric and water. Large grassy fenced pasture, on good road, near Frankfort. Call 708-670-2118.

### WANTED

Wanted 1972 and older cars, trucks, parts, unfinished projects, and 1967/69 Camaros. Call 708-439-9770.

Wanted 6 ft blow mold Santa, with or without light. Call 708-439-9770.

## ABC'S OF SPICES

We already gave you the ABC's of Food but the Cook County Farm Bureau also loves spices... All types of spices with all types of flavors. In this feature, we will be highlighting different types of spices, from A to Z. If you'd like a full list of the ABC's of Food, contact the CCFB office.

This month  
"H"

**HABANERO  
POWDER**



**Habanero peppers originated in the Amazon region. They were later spread to Mexico and the Caribbean by migrating peoples.**

The name "Habanero" means "from Havana." Despite their name, these peppers are not native to Cuba but were traded through Havana.



The taste and aroma from the powder is very hot, fruity and citrusy.

Uses for Habanero Powder are chili, sauces, stew, meat, stir fry, salsa, dips and chicken.



**Spicy**

Habanero peppers can reach up to 350,000 Scoville Heat Units (SHU). This makes them significantly hotter than jalapeños, which average around 5,000 SHU.

**FACTORS LIKE SOIL, CLIMATE, AND EVEN THE TIME OF HARVEST CAN AFFECT THE PEPPER'S SPICINESS.**

Habanero peppers are rich in vitamins A and C. These vitamins are essential for immune function and skin health.



Next month...Italian Seasoning

## THIS MONTH in Cook County Agriculture...

### NATIVE LANDSCAPE DESIGN VIRTUAL WORKSHOP SERIES 2025

presented by Extension South Suburban Cook Horticulture Unit Native plants are beautiful, beneficial to wildlife, and adapted to weather extremes, but how do you make them look their best in your home landscape? Learn design principles and native plant selection in this workshop with University of Illinois Extension.

**Part I: Lecture and Case Study - Tuesday, January 21, 2025, from 5:30-8 pm CST via Zoom.**

This session will introduce the Cook County Conservation@Home program, design concepts, plant lists, plant research, site assessment, and incorporation of native plants into the landscape. Attendees can choose to attend part I. Deadline to register for Part I is January 20, 2025

**Part II: Coaching Session - Pick one of two dates, held on Tuesday, February 4 and 18, from 5:30-7:30 pm. CST via Zoom.** At the end of the lecture, attendees will be invited to attend one of two virtual coaching sessions, where they will be mentored by a Master Naturalist or Master Gardener who will help with garden layout, plant selection, and troubleshooting. **Homework is required to attend the coaching session and attendance at the lecture is required as a prerequisite. Capacity for coaching sessions is limited and attending the lecture does not guarantee a spot in a coaching session.** REGISTER: <https://extension.illinois.edu/events/2025-01-21-native-landscape-design-workshop>

**WINTER PLANT BASH 2025 AT TED'S GREENHOUSE, Saturday, February 1, 2025 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Get ready to celebrate all things green and leafy at Winter Plant Bash 2025, a fun-filled event where plant lovers unite. The Best Plant Vendors and Artisans from all over Chicagoland, music all day-live Band at 1:00 pm, amazing food, multiple raffles and BYOB is encouraged. Tickets available online at [EventBright.com](http://EventBright.com) and kids under 13 are free. Ted's Greenhouse is located at 16930 84th Avenue Tinley Park, IL 60487. REGISTER: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/winter-plant-bash-2025-tickets-1093640591449?aff=ebdssbdstsearch>

### WILL-SOUTH COOK SWCD CONSERVATION EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

In the spring of 2025, the Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District will be awarding three \$2,000 scholarships to Will or South Cook County students who plan to major in an agriculture or natural resource-related field at an accredited college or school of higher learning. The purpose of these scholarships is to further the cause of soil, water, and natural resource conservation by helping deserving students pursue the subject at an advanced level.

Applications are available at [www.will-scookswcd.org](http://www.will-scookswcd.org) or at the SWCD district office. To be considered for the scholarship, all materials must be received by the office by February 28, 2025.

To promote your activity, email [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) or call 708-354-3276 by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. Please include your name, the event date/time, a one-sentence description of the event, and how a reader can obtain further information in the email. We will edit submissions based on space allowances in the publication.



The CCFB Board planted an Oak Tree on the grounds of the organization to recognize and remember the outstanding leadership provided by so many organizational presidents through the years.

# Programs, Workshops and Webinars

For Members, Farmers, Teachers, Landowners, Foodies, Business owners, and those that want new experiences and to have a great time!

**REGISTER TODAY** for the following great programs by calling the office at **708-354-3276** or at [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org)

## 2025 Community Urban Garden Grant Program

All community-based urban gardens in Cook County are encouraged to apply for a \$350 grant fund for use in your community garden. Grant details and applications are being accepted through February 28, 2025. Grant awarded mid-March 2025 Application is available now, so why wait? Email Deb: [membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org](mailto:membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org)



**LOCATION:** Applications available online: <https://cookcfb.org/stay-updated-/events-and-programs/community-programs/profile/grants-1> or by emailing: [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org)

**DATE:** Applications available Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, deadline is Friday, Feb. 28, 2025

**TIME:** 4:00-4:30 pm 30 minutes with Q & A

## Membership Mondays 2025

Are you a member or prospective member interested in learning more about the benefits and programs a CCFB membership provides? Then join us to hear from CCFB staff who will highlight member programs, member benefits, and the website. Staff will provide demonstrations to access membership benefit discounts so members can take full advantage. An open Q&A session will follow the short staff presentation.



**LOCATION:** Zoom; link will be emailed prior

**DATE:** Monday, January 20, 2025 **TIME:** 4:00-4:30 pm 30 minutes with Q & A

**REGISTRATION:** Registration is required by emailing [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) or call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276.

## Zoom Book Club

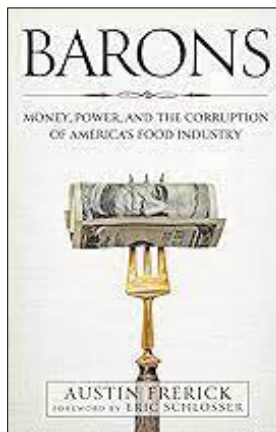
Participants will read "Barons: Money, Power, and the Corruption of America's Food Industry" and will be asked to explore the rise and consequences of their actions of seven corporate titans of the agricultural industry. Barons explores alleged corruption and monopolies within the agricultural industry.

**LOCATION:** Zoom, link will be provided before first meeting

**DATE:** Meeting dates will be the following Tuesdays – January 21<sup>st</sup>, February 4<sup>th</sup>, February 25<sup>th</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup>

**TIME:** 6:00 PM

**REGISTRATION:** Email Bona at: [bona@cookcfb.org](mailto:bona@cookcfb.org) to sign up. Last day to sign up is January 10th.



## Workshop on Preparing Wills and Trusts and Transferring Non-Titled Property

*(Estate Planning and Trust Administration)*  
Presented by Thomas J. Olofsson, J.D., Estate Planning Attorney



Do you need to update your will? Do you know what to do in preparing a will and a trust? Do you understand what probate court is? This program will provide the advantages and disadvantages of preparing a will and trust. The program will inform you what types of information you will need to gather and decisions you will need make before meeting with a lawyer to prepare a will or trust. Also, tips will be shared on what to look for in choosing a lawyer and where to locate a lawyer for this task.

**LOCATION:** Zoom (the zoom link will be emailed to all participants the evening before the class)

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 18, 2025 **TIME:** 6:30-8:00 pm

**PRICE:** No charge for Cook County Farm Bureau Members. \$10 for non-members.

**REGISTRATION:** Call the CCFB at 708-354-3276.

## Solar: Exploring Solar for Ag Operations - Lunch & Learn Webinar with Q & A

Webinar presented by Craig Pals, P.E., CEM-Vice President | Tick Tock Energy, Inc.



Learn about solar for farm and ag-related applications, understand available federal and state incentives & grants, energy cost savings, and financing options.

**LOCATION:** Presented via Zoom – link to be sent the week prior

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025 **TIME:** 12:00-12:45 pm

**REGISTRATION:** Registration is required for Zoom Link: call 708-354-3276 | email: [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) | online using member account at: [www.myifb.org](http://www.myifb.org)

## Grow a Giant Pumpkin 101

Mark Moulas, 2024 Giant Pumpkin Contest Winner, member of the IL Giant Pumpkin Growers Association (IGPGA) and executive committee member for the international governance organization, the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth (GPC) and a Giant Pumpkin aficionado will deliver a presentation followed by Q & A, to help begin your Giant Pumpkin journey with success. In Person attendees will receive free giant pumpkin seeds, courtesy of Mark Moulas.



**LOCATION:** Cook County Farm Bureau | 6438 Joliet Rd, Countryside – Lower-Level Meeting Room

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 25, 2025 **TIME:** 6:00-7:00 pm

**REGISTRATION:** Registration is required: call 708-354-3276 | email: [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) | online using member account at: [www.myifb.org](http://www.myifb.org)

See March Programs on page 10.

### To our Voting Members,

We would like to personally thank you on behalf of the board and staff for renewing your \$45 membership with the Cook County Farm Bureau®. We commend you on your continued resilience, determination, and energy. We value your commitment as we partner for a strong agriculture present and future.

As your partner, your Cook County Farm Bureau offers great resources, information, and programs for essential support for you and our other members, farmers and farm owners, workers, small businesses, parents and youth, and affiliated companies. We love being a strong partner to you.

We continue to see firsthand the important role farming and agriculture plays every day in the Chicagoland area and in our country. We continue supporting area food, fiber, and fuel producers to help provide high-quality, farm fresh products to local consumers. We view this as important work.

Cook County Farm Bureau membership remains the best value in town. We thank you for your membership and we look forward to serving you in the year to come!

### RENEW NOW

Scan below to renew your ccfb membership



[www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org)

Renew today by calling **708-354-FARM (3276)** or using this QR code (members service renewal link).

### To our Associate Members,

It has been our true pleasure serving you and your membership needs during this past year. We hope you will renew your \$20 membership for another year to take advantage of our value proposition (you received a renewal notice recently).

Cook County and Illinois family farmers seek to provide you, your family, and families across our great country and beyond with safe, wholesome, sustainable food supply.

Your Farm Bureau membership provides you and your family:

- Access to local farm and food producers
- The opportunity to support Illinois farm families and food security
- Information about farm in and your food
- Programs, education, events and more
- Agriculture in the Classroom for local students, teachers and parents
- 300,000+ discounts (abenity link or member center)
- And much more! Check out [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org)

Thank you for your membership!