



# COOK COUNTY GO-OPERATOR

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

## Mark Your Calendar



### September

- Aug. - Sept.** BINGO Farm Crawl **PG 12**
- 13** Foliage Fest **PG 12**
- 15** Membership Monday
- 16** Intro to Candle Making **PG 12**
- 24-26** Leaders to Washington

### October

- 1** Fall Barn Quilt Workshop **PG 12**
- 4** Giant Pumpkin, Dessert, Carving, Honey Contest **PG 12**
- 21** Cheese and Halloween Candy Pairing **PG 12**

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



**Name a Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader (there are two) that the CCFB Foundation recently supported in the members' quest for greater agricultural leadership training through the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Program.**

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)

**August Winner: Barbara Spellman**

**Question:** Which plant was named National Garden Bureau's 2025 Plant of the Year?

**Answer: Milkweed**



**AITC Intern, Libby Heenan (right) presents Paulette Edwards with the CCFB signage at Michigan Terrace Garden as part of the Commodities/Marketing Team Urban Garden Grant program.**

## GREEN THUMB IN A BOX

Michigan Terrace Garden is in Chicago's Washington Park neighborhood and is a living demonstration garden designed to inspire and educate residents on how to grow food in small spaces in unique ways. The garden initiative serves to empower the community with hands on learning with sustainable growing practices with residents receiving the harvest yields. Grant funds were used for plantings, seed, soil, and supplies for the garden, and purchased at member businesses. **For more photos/recipients, go to Page 4.**

## Board Continues Charting Course for Cook CFB Future

The Cook County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, as part of the approved 2025 Strategic Plan, continued taking steps for the organization's strong future by adopting several subplans that intentionally focus the organization's resources on stakeholders. During the August 13 board meeting, the board reviewed these subplans to better serve the following groups:

- For the general public: A digital news and media platform will be tested to provide individuals throughout the area information, news, interesting stories, activities, and connections for those involved in or are curious about agriculture.

**"Future" Continues on Page 8**

- For young families: The Family Connections Group will be centered around Agriculture Literacy by providing member experiences, member-only exclusiveness, and local connections.
- For those that love to grow things: The Green Thumbs Group will be centered around gardening, pollinators, and urban growing for member knowledge, activities, and local connections.
- For active seniors: The Go-Go Seniors Group brings regular interaction, activities, community, and health for members seeking local connections.

## Word of the Day

During Member Appreciation Week we introduced a "Word of the Day" feature. We enjoyed the opportunity to talk with our members, and we believed those who called enjoyed it as well!

You will have to continue to read the Co-Operator carefully to find the word and the date to call in as it will in a different spot each month.

We look forward to continuing these calls. It was a lot of fun! Good luck to you!

**August Winner: Leah Walton**

*August word was Sunflower and found on page 12.*

**Start your search for the September word today!!!**

## 2025 local HONEY CONTEST

on **Saturday, October 4, 2025**

9 AM—11 AM

at

**Puckerville Farms**

13332 Bell Rd Lemont, IL

Our 8th local Honey competition to be held in

conjunction with the

Cook County Farm Bureau's

**25th Giant Pumpkin Contest**

&

**Activities**

**No Entry Fee**

Registration check in and Festivities begin at 9 am. Contest open to all CDBA & CCFB members and their dependents. Must be present to win.

### Voting Criteria 100 Points

- Flavor and Aroma 25
- Appearance 25
- Freedom from crystals 25
- No impurities/froth 25

### Cash Prizes\*

- 1st place
- 2nd place
- 3rd place

\*Top 3 will receive a Ribbon

### Judging Samples

Clear, unlabeled, GLASS container (no less than 8 oz, not greater than 16 oz)

### Register:

by phone: (708)354-3276

email: [membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org](mailto:membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org)

CCFB members online account at [MyIFB.org](http://MyIFB.org)

Cook County Farm Bureau®  
6438 Joliet Rd Ste 101 | Countryside, IL 60525  
708-354-3276  
[www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org)



British Griffis



Rebecca Biernacki

## Cook CFB Foundation Proudly Supports Leadership Training for Two Members

In August, The Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation acted to provide tuition support for two Young Leader members who have been selected as participants in the next class of the Illinois Agriculture Leadership Program.

British Griffis, Calumet City, and Rebecca Biernacki, Tinley Park, will begin the 19-month leadership training program early this fall. Both Griffis and Biernacki have been Cook County Farm Bureau members for many years and serve on the organization's Young Leaders Action Team for leadership growth, philanthropic programming, and program activities beneficial to members.

The Cook County Farm Bureau board enacted Future Forward in 2024, an intentional focus and strategy to

recruit, train, engage, and develop a new crop of young agriculturalists and members with a focus on leadership and involvement through education, program participation, and training.

The CCFB Board views the Illinois Agriculture Leadership Program as a premier leadership development program which provides training for outstanding leadership skills, world knowledge, and understanding on several key agricultural and food related issues. The program consists of classes, workshops, group activities, and experiences in Washington, D.C. and overseas.

Through their support, the board's goal is for participants to enjoy the experiences, grow through participation, and seek to continue strengthening area agriculture and community locally as a result.

## HOW FARM BUREAU SERVED YOU IN AUGUST

- ▶ Provided travel benefit info for members to enjoy discounted getaways and vacations.
- ▶ Supported local families and partner Food Checkout Day food pantries by purchasing Cook County 4H members' animals at the 4H auction at the Lake County Fair. Meat will be donated to the partner food pantries to support families in need.
- ▶ Showcased participating member Ag businesses for member and public to visit during the 2025 Farm Crawl BINGO.
- ▶ Partnered with the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Margenot Group at the University of Illinois to host a Nutrient Stewardship Field Day to explore innovative approaches to nutrient recycling at Smits Farms in Chicago Heights.



Call in the office on September 17<sup>th</sup> with the word of the day, "CORN"

## 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...

- Todd Price, Bryan Blau, and Blake Lanphier for representing Cook County Farm Bureau at this year's Lake County Fair 4-H Animal Auction. All animals purchased will be donated to the Food Checkout Day partner food pantries.
- The entire Smits Family for hosting this year's Nutrient Stewardship Field Days.
- Todd Price for testifying on behalf of Cook County Farm Bureau in support of Wagner Farm's Master Plan.
- Jennifer Miller for her participation in the District Young Leaders Discussion Meet. She will compete again at the State Discussion Meet in December!
- Carl Smits, Andrew Margenot, Alexis Barnes, Michael Barbic, and Michael Howard for presenting at this year's Nutrient Stewardship Field Days.
- Member farm businesses who opened up their operations for visits from members and the public for Farm Crawl BINGO in August and September.
- The U of I Extension Master Gardener Unit, Master Gardeners, Coordinator Margaret Burns-Westmeyer, and Educator Nancy Kreith, for their unwavering dedication to serving community and members' horticultural needs.
- Commodities/Marketing Team volunteers, Rick and Cathy Johnson, for touring and presenting signage to garden grant recipients.
- CCFB Ag in the Classroom presenters for preparing to bring agricultural education to the students of Cook County.
- Intern Libby Heeran for assisting the Ag Literacy program this summer with such enthusiasm and skill!

## Co-Operator

Published Monthly

### Cook County Farm Bureau

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# Downwind

by **BOB ROHRER, CCFB MANAGER**

## “Fish Stories”

My “friends” frequently like to share a fish story about me.

They say, “Bob is a great fisherman... He caught a fish this long,” while holding out one hand extended to show the length of the fish. My



“He caught a fish this long!”

friends think they are pretty funny with their “one arm jokes”.

My personal fish stories began on the farm. My best memories growing

up on the farm in western Illinois were the extracurricular activities available as a kid. Hanging out at the pond and fishing was one of those activities I most enjoyed.

Almost every farm (worth anything in my opinion) had a farm pond. In the area where I grew up, most of those farm ponds were created for the purpose of watering cattle or sheep. Other ponds were formed after farm ground was strip-mined for coal and water filled the giant holes that remained. Those farm ponds provided great year-round entertainment for the farm kids: Rock skipping. Ice hockey. Teasing snakes. Canoeing. And, of course, Fishing.

My first fishing experience was when I was seven years old. My grandparents gave me a bamboo pole for my birthday. My grandpa, the Farmer I, announced he was going to take me fishing. I’m not sure if he even liked fishing but looking back, I’m pretty sure it’s what you do with your grandson. A time-honored tradition.

He led the way to the backside of one of his farms where an old strip-mine pond lived, serene and inviting. That day, Grandpa taught me a simple fishing formula: kid’s pole + hook + bobber + worms = bluegill.

I caught a few bluegill that day. Most importantly, Grandpa unleashed in me a fishing drive and craving that exists to today.

My dad, the Farmer II, would occasionally take me fishing when he had time (and wasn’t too exhausted). However, usually it was my mother,

a patient and dear soul, that delivered and fueled my fishing love as a kid.

From 5th through 8th grade, we lived on a tenant farm that had a series of strip-mine ponds in the back of the property. Throughout the summer, Mom would accompany me and my siblings to

the pond to fish. Bluegill, sunfish, smallmouth bass, bullhead, and catfish were the targets.

Cottonmouth snakes and chiggers were not. Mom, with infinite patience, would re-bait hooks, untangle lines, change lures, grab fish, and lovingly remove hooks from angry brothers.

Our landlord had another strip mine pond a few miles away which was stocked with albino catfish. He would feed those fish high-protein pig starter pellets. The water would boil with massive catfish gorging themselves. What a spectacle to watch! I wanted so badly to sneak on my bike with my pole and reel in a few huge catfish. The lecture from my parents (about tanning my hide) stopped me.

As my brothers and I grew older, now without our mother in tow, we would head to the Spoon River or the pond on my uncle’s place or other public (or sometimes private) pond access for new and different fishing opportunities and experiences. My college graduation gift to myself was fishing in the Minnesota/Canada Boundary Waters for a week with three friends. Over the years, I have purchased fishing licenses in the states of Illinois, Wyoming, Montana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York, Maine, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Colorado, and Missouri fishing in lakes, streams, rivers, backwaters, and saltwater. There are probably other states I should have purchased a fishing license but failed (shhhh, don’t tell the ranger). And it all started with a farm pond.

Life has a way of coming full circle. I recently received a Father’s Day gift from my daughter. Two kid- sized fishing poles. The hint: take your grandsons fishing if you love it so much!

Knowing that “catching” is better than “fishing”, I felt that the proper success opportunity was crucial. When board member Roger Freeman asked me recently, “When are you bringing the crew out to fish at my farm pond?” I felt that the stars had aligned.

We had a wonderful afternoon at that farm pond where I taught my grandsons the simple fish formula: kid’s pole + hook + bobber + worms (or hotdogs) = bluegill (or a bass).

Did I mention that “catching” is awesome!

As a finale to a great fish story day, Mr. Freeman fed his farm pond catfish scoops of high-protein fish pellets (looked like pig starter). The grandsons were fascinated as the water boiled with massive catfish gorging themselves. I hope those boys don’t sneak on their bikes with their poles to reel in a huge catfish. They might need a lecture.

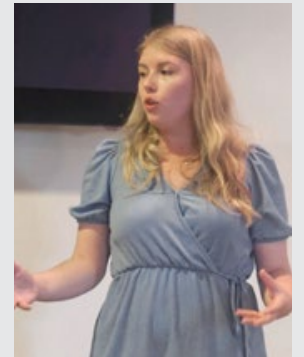
You have to love a farm pond!



Grandpa Bob with the “state record” bass caught by his grandsons.

## Cook Young Leader Advances to State Competition in 2025 Farm Bureau Discussion Meet

The Discussion Meet is a competition promoted by the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) State Young Leader Committee. The Farm Bureau’s strength depends on its members’ ability to analyze agricultural issues and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The competition is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each committee member.



Pictured: Jennifer Miller

Jennifer Miller, Cook County Farm Bureau Younger Leader member, participated in the 2025 State Young Leader discussion meet on July 29th in Mazon. She made a point about hydroponics as a potential solution as farmland is lost to urban sprawl. Miller, as a result of her efforts, will be advancing to the state discussion meet competition in Chicago in December.



Harrison Albright, Will County Farm Bureau Young Leader and Jennifer Miller prepare for their closing statements on how Farm Bureau can help farm families in succession planning.

## Recipe of the Month

### Sweet Meatball Appetizer *Are you ready for football!?*

Kathy Lesser, Chicago

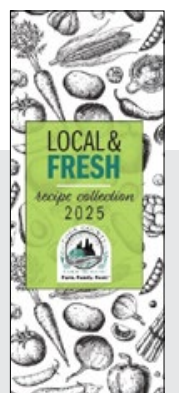
This is Kathy’s late husband’s favorite recipe!

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 t salt
- 1/4 t pepper
- 1oz BBQ sauce  
*(plain is the best one for this recipe)*
- 2 T grape jelly
- 1/2 c brown sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 T onion, chopped
- 1/2 t Tabasco sauce

### DIRECTIONS

Thoroughly mix the ground beef, eggs, salt, and pepper. Set aside. In a large pot combine all the other ingredients. Roll beef mixture into one-inch balls and drop into sauce, bring to a boil. Turn down and simmer for 40 minutes, until done. Makes about 45-50 meatballs. Enjoy!



### 2025 Recipe Collection is Available!

To receive a copy of the 2025 Recipe Collection Booklet, call 708-354-3276, email: ccfb@cookcfb.org, or register from the MyIFB member center account.

# 2025 Garden Grant Visits

Sponsored by the Commodities/Marketing Team

CCFB volunteers Rick and Cathy Johnson visited two of the CCFB 2025 Community Garden Grant Program recipients, touring the gardens with a sign presentation, during the hottest summer days! The Garden Grant program is sponsored by the CCFB Commodities Marketing Team. Check out what's happening at these deserving community gardens.

## South Holland Kids Community Garden



South Holland Kids Community Garden coordinators and volunteers: (left to right) Myrtis Brown, Vanessa Bradley, Kara Davis, and Robin Scheldberg.



This new, first-time community garden is located in South Holland, serving several school districts within the Village. The kids' garden will allow kids a place to plant, grow, learn, and play, to improve social, emotional and confidence skills while consuming fresh local grown produce and fruit. A Kids Farmers' Market will also allow opportunities to increase skills and learning. The garden used grant funds at member business to purchase tools, fertilizer, and plants.

## Riverside Community Garden



CCFB volunteer Rick Johnson presents Riverside Community Garden Treasurer, Katie Gregory, Garden Manager, Christina Raguso, and President, Elain Ruggless with CCFB garden grant funding signage as a recipient of a 2025 grant.



Located in Riverside, Riverside Community Garden is an Illinois not-for-profit community donation garden and its mission is to provide fresh produce to food insecure individuals and families while promoting food growing and composting thereby building community through partnerships and local groups. The garden used grant funds to fill two attractive handicap level pizza garden plant troughs with soil and plants from member businesses.

Berwyn Roots Is Comprised of Three Community Gardens:

## Serenity Park Community Garden, Proska Park Children's Garden, & Ebenezer Neighborhood Gardens

All of the gardens reside in the town of Berwyn serving every age of resident, and are home to free and low-cost events that encourage growing food, fruit, and pollinators. The garden's yield of produce, fruits, herbs, and seeds are used to support community fridges, free plant distribution, seed swaps, and more. Grant funds were used for vegetable and herb plants, perennials, compost, and supplies for the garden, and were purchased from member businesses.



Garden Coordinator, Julie Roth, and avid garden volunteer daughter, Izzy, can be found in the garden daily.



## Green Thumb In A Box – Michigan Terrace Garden



Garden Coordinators, Darryl Armstrong and Paulette Edwards, welcomed us to the garden with zucchini bread and homemade lemonade, using the garden's zucchini and lemon balm.



# Supporting Youth and Fighting Hunger at the Lake County Fair

Cook County Farm Bureau proudly supported local 4-H members at the Lake County Fair Animal Auction in July by purchasing three animals raised by hardworking 4-H members. In keeping with our commitment to community and agriculture, the meat from these animals will be donated to our Food Checkout Day partner food pantries, Hattie B. Williams Food Pantry of Oak Forest and Maine Township Food Pantry of Park Ridge.



**Cook County Farm Bureau leaders Todd Price, Bryan Blau, and Blake Lanphier purchased Alex Boarders' 175-pound sheep at this year's Lake County Fair.**



**Farm Bureau leaders Todd Price and Bryan Blau purchased Cameron Conroy's 225-pound hog at this year's Lake County Fair 4-H Animal Auction.**



**Farm Bureau leaders Todd Price, Bryan Blau, and Blake Lanphier purchased Linus Coleman's 143-pound lamb as part of this year's 4-H animal auction.**

# How Can I Avoid Falling Into Debt?

Discover practical tips to stay on track financially and avoid accumulating high-interest debt.

By Jennifer Killian, IAA Credit Union Marketing Manager



Jennifer Killian

**Do one thing:**

If you don't have one already, set up a separate checking or savings account and designate it as your emergency fund. Move money into the account every time you get paid.

**Avoid Overspending With These Strategies**

Sometimes when the going gets tough, even the toughest among us go shopping. Why is that? Buying something we want can trigger the feel-good endorphins in our brains that give us a boost, at least in the short term. But treat yourself one too many times, and you can end up living above your means, which can potentially lead to living with high-interest credit card debt.

**Carrying Debt Month to Month?**

Unfortunately, research shows that about half of Americans with credit cards carry debt from month to month, likely because they can't afford to pay off their accounts in full at the end of each billing cycle. If this sounds like you, or someone you know, take heart.

**There is hope.** The good news is, there are strategies you can use to avoid the pitfalls of such debt, specifically high-interest debt from credit cards, so you can ultimately save some money (by avoiding interest charges), and steer clear of the mental stress that can come from living under a mountain of bills.

**Tip: Many of these same strategies can also help you dig yourself out of debt if you are in that situation.**

Consider these practical tips to help you avoid falling into high-interest debt.

**1. Only Use Cash**

One way to keep from overspending is by using cash instead of debit or credit cards to make purchases. While this may not work for all of your monthly bills, you can certainly use this method for weekly incidentals and even groceries.

**Here's how to do it:**

- After you get paid, pull a certain amount of cash from your checking account to cover your expenses.
- Only use cash for your expenses.
- When the money is gone, it's time to stop spending.

**2. Create a Spending Plan (or Budget)**

One key to achieving your financial goals is to know where your money is going every month. It is a good idea to develop spending plans based on your goals and values. Your spending plans, or budgets, should include the following:

- Your monthly bills
- Regular expenses
- Long-term savings
- Irregular-but-expected expenses (such as replacing electronics, car repairs, and travel).

If you choose to take on more debt, confirm through your budget that you can make space for this new monthly bill.

IAA Credit Union is proud to partner with GreenPath Financial Wellness — a free money management and financial education service provider. Here is an example Building Budget worksheet to use to get started.

**3. Build an Emergency Fund**

Having an emergency fund — or a rainy day account — is important to have to fall back on when life happens. A good rule to follow is to keep an emergency fund of at least three to six months' worth of expenses and keep this money somewhere other than where you have your main checking and savings accounts.

**Separate Account**

The reason for a separate account is this: Out of sight, out of mind. Keeping your money for emergencies in a different account that you're not constantly looking at anytime you log into your main

online banking portal can help you keep that fund intact and available when you need it for an unpredictable emergency that you might otherwise have to take on some debt to handle.

At IAA Credit Union, our Premier Savings offers a high rate on your savings up to \$20,000 while allowing you to have access to your money whenever you need it.

**4. Learn to Live Below Your Means**

Living below your means is a common way to help people get out of debt and stay out, for good. If you're not exactly sure what that looks like, here are some examples of living below your means as a way to save and invest more for your financial future:

- Buy a smaller home or rent a smaller apartment than you can afford.
- Purchase used vehicles instead of new ones.
- Never pay full price if you can help it: Shop sales on everything from meat to sofas and shoes.
- Save your raises by moving the amount of a pay increase into your 401(k) or IRA.
- Get a library card so you can check out books and stream movies for free (or really cheap).

**5. Unsubscribe**

One of the best ways to avoid temptation is to kick it out of your email inbox forever. We know it can be hard to resist those clever subject lines sprinkled with cute emojis waiting for you every morning. So, if you have signed up for email alerts from some of your favorite retailers, hotels, or wine-of-the-month clubs, it's time to:

- Scroll down to the tiny type near the bottom of those tempting emails.
- Click the unsubscribe link.
- Don't resubscribe later.

After all, you can't buy what you can't see and don't know about. Staying out of high-interest debt doesn't require drastic changes, just consistent, mindful habits. By implementing even one or two of these strategies, you can build a stronger financial foundation and reduce the stress that often comes with money worries. And remember, you're not alone on your journey: IAA Credit Union is here to help visit [www.iaacu.org](http://www.iaacu.org) for resources, support, and guidance. Small steps today can lead to big financial wins tomorrow.

## August 1 to September 13, 2025

# Cook CFB to Host Farm Crawl BINGO

### B-I-N-G-O Farm Crawl 2025...

Play and fill our BINGO Farm Crawl 2025 Card by visiting participating Cook County Farm Bureau member Farms, Farmstands, Greenhouses, Garden Centers, and Agribusinesses during our self-guided BINGO Farm Crawl and qualify for our BINGO ca\$h prize raffle. BINGO Cards submitted to the CCFB office will be entered into a drawing for the chance at top ca\$h and other small prizes.

Farm Crawl BINGO is free, offering diverse agri-locations to visit starting August 1 to September 13, 2025, allowing ample time to crawl our many locations in and around the county. Crawlers use the BINGO Farm Crawl card to record visits which will provide BINGO details, locations, times, and special crawl offers.

### How do I get the BINGO card?

- Downloadable BINGO Card: <https://cookcfb.org/stay-updated/-/events-and-programs/programs-and-events/profile/farm-crawl>
- Email [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) for one to be emailed
- Mail: call the CCFB and we will mail
- Stop by the CCFB and pick up one



### SCAN THE QR CODE

to learn more about the Farm Crawl Bingo event from the CCFB website!



Cook County Farm Bureau members are eligible to use the many financial products, resources and tools provided through the IAA Credit Union. IAA Credit Union's nearly 75-year partnership with the Illinois Farm Bureau is built on a shared legacy of trust, community, and mutual support. Together, we have cultivated a lasting relationship that prioritizes the needs of our members. We invite you to explore the many benefits of IAACU membership and discover how we can serve as your trusted financial partner. **Scan the QR code or visit us at [www.iaacu.org](http://www.iaacu.org) today!**



# Planting Seeds

## Learning All about Ag during AITC Summer Internship

In August and September, AITC Summer Intern Elizabeth "Libby" Heenan will be taking over my Planting Seeds column to tell you a little more about herself and all of her activities this summer with the Cook County Farm Bureau. I hope you learn a little more about Libby and enjoy getting to know our summer intern!

**Katrina Milton, Director of Ag Literacy**  
Katrina can be reached at [aitc@cookcfb.org](mailto:aitc@cookcfb.org).

One of the most important things I learned as a student in high school was that without agriculture, there would be no civilization. At first, this idea didn't make much sense to me. I thought, "What does this have to do with farming?" My teacher explained that farming began through a long process of observation and experimentation when hunters and gatherers discovered that spreading seeds resulted in new growth. Farming allowed people to settle in one place and maintain a consistent food supply, ultimately leading to the development of other professions like merchants, carpenters, and teachers, which contributed to the creation of civilization as we know it.

This realization fueled my passion for agriculture and inspired me to seek hands-on experiences this past summer with the Cook County Farm Bureau. Throughout the summer, I traveled all over the county, educating the residents of Cook County on the importance of agriculture. One of the highlights of my internship was participating in library events, where we engaged with kids and their families on various agricultural topics, such as transportation and tacos. I loved showing families how farming impacts their everyday lives, even in a big city! My favorite part of these events was when people asked questions, as it showed their interest and desire to learn more.

These library events were just the beginning. During my internship I was also able to help with our Summer Ag Institute (SAI). I was able to learn more about Route 66 before the highway's 100th anniversary in 2026, as well as other forms of transportation, including

waterways and railways. I loved learning about the Chicago River on this trip. During our time in downtown Chicago, we were able to learn all about the river and the overall impact it has on the city through a boat tour on Lake Michigan and a tour at the McCormick Bridgehouse Museum.

Though my time at the farm bureau was short, it definitely was sweet. I gained so many invaluable skills and experiences that I will take with me for the rest of my life. I will forever be grateful to the farm bureau and my farm bureau family I gained along the way. Thank you so much Cook County Farm Bureau!

*Libby Heenan, AITC Summer Intern*



**Book & Projects Grants**

Are you an educator interested in applying for Illinois Ag in the Classroom's Book or Project Grants? Attend a one-hour virtual webinar for tips and tricks, ideas, and inspiration in filling out your grant application!

For more information visit: [bit.ly/4oPWDLQ](https://bit.ly/4oPWDLQ)

Grant applications due **October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025**




**Teachers**

PRIZE DRAW



Enter to win

# MENTAL HEALTH CARE PACKAGE

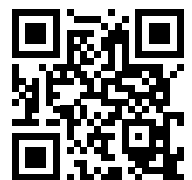
Cook County Farm Bureau in partnership with Illinois Farm Bureau and COUNTRY Financial is bringing mental health awareness to our farmer members by providing "Strength Over Silence" giveaway bags. These bags include stress balls, bracelets, hot/cold packs and resources available to Illinois farmers.

Mental health and substance abuse resources are available at the County Farm Bureau office and during events.



Additional resources are also available at <https://cookcfb.org/ccfb/ccfb-in-action/farmer-mental-health>

We are excited to bring agriculture to your Cook County classroom! If CCFB's Agriculture in the Classroom Program visits your classroom before October 10, 2025, you will automatically be entered in a drawing to win a \$50 Amazon gift card. The winning educator will be announced via email October 13. Visit [bit.ly/AITCplease](https://bit.ly/AITCplease) today to schedule your in-school field trip!



## Master Gardener Resource Center

### Continues to Assist Members During the Fall Season

The Cook County Farm Bureau® and the University of Illinois Extension continue to partner on a project that benefits local Farm Bureau members and the general public. Since April 15, the master gardeners have been back (working virtually) to answer questions from members and the general public related to gardening and horticulture. This dedicated group will continue to respond to questions through mid-November of 2025.

The master gardeners will be accessible by emailing [mastergardener@cookcfb.org](mailto:mastergardener@cookcfb.org) or by contacting the Cook County Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276.

General topic areas that can be addressed include soil test recommendations, plant disease issues and treatments, horticulture related questions, pest identification and treatment, and more. Commercial related questions will be forwarded to the University of Illinois Extension professional staff.

# AGRICULTURE ADVENTURES FOR FAMILIES



## All About Mushrooms!

A mushroom is the fleshy, spore-bearing body of a fungus, typically produced above ground. It's the part of the fungus that's visible and comparable to the fruit of a plant. Mushrooms are neither plants nor animals. They belong to their own kingdom called Fungi. Mushrooms are more closely related to humans than they are to plants! **Scientists believe that humans and mushrooms share an ancestor.**



## Let's Cook Up Some "Minecraft Mushroom Stew"

Recipe from [www.girlgamergalaxy.com/2016/12/20/minecraft-mushroom-stew/](http://www.girlgamergalaxy.com/2016/12/20/minecraft-mushroom-stew/)

### DIRECTIONS:

- Melt butter in a large pot over medium-high heat.
- Add the mushrooms along with a pinch of salt and cook until they release their juices; then lower the heat.
- Keep cooking, stirring frequently, until the juices evaporate and the mushrooms turn golden brown, which should take about 15 minutes.
- Set aside some attractive mushroom slices for garnish later, if desired.
- Next, add the onions and cook until they become soft and translucent, around 5 minutes.
- Mix in the flour with the mushroom mixture and cook, stirring often, for 2 minutes to eliminate the raw flour flavor.
- Bundle the thyme sprigs together with kitchen twine and add them to the mushroom mixture, along with the garlic cloves.
- Pour in the chicken stock and water.
- Bring the mixture to a simmer and let it cook for an hour.
- After that, remove the thyme bundle.
- Transfer the soup to a blender in small batches and blend on high speed until it reaches a smooth and thick consistency.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
  - 2 lbs sliced mushrooms
  - 1 yellow onion, diced
  - 1 1/2 tbsp all-purpose flour
  - 6 sprigs fresh thyme
  - 2 garlic cloves, peeled
  - 4 cups chicken broth
  - 1 cup water
  - 1 cup heavy whipping cream
  - 1 teaspoon fresh thyme
  - Return the soup to the pot and stir in the cream.
  - Season with salt and black pepper, then serve in bowls, garnished with the reserved mushroom slices and a few thyme leaves.
- Enjoy your Minecraft Mushroom Stew!**

## FUN FACTS

### About Mushrooms

- In 2019, the U.S. produced around **844 BILLION POUNDS** of mushrooms.
- Pennsylvania grows over **66%** of the mushrooms in the U.S.
- China is the biggest producer of edible mushrooms, growing about **HALF** of all cultivated mushrooms in the world.
- There are more than **2,000 VARIETIES** of edible mushrooms in the world.
- Even though the visible mushroom is short-lived, the hidden mycelium underground can live for a very long time and become huge. One colony of *Armillaria solidipes* in the U.S. thought to be **2,400 YEARS OLD** and covers an area of about **2,200 ACRES** (or 3.5 square miles)! Most of this fungus is hidden underground, connecting decaying wood and tree roots.
- Mushrooms do not photosynthesize and make their own food, instead, they are decomposers, living off of dead and decaying matter such as wood, leaves, and dung. This means mushrooms **DO NOT NEED SUNLIGHT** to grow.
- Mushrooms are **90% WATER**.



**SCAN THIS QR CODE** to read Illinois Farm Bureau's Farm Bites about Mushrooms, featuring Windy City Mushroom in Chicago



## September Word Search

Last Month's Winner:  
**Nicholas Skipitaris**

Above	T	I	A	X	R	E	G	C	I	X	L	C	W	C	J
Animal	T	Z	Q	J	L	O	V	W	M	S	A	C	G	W	K
Edible	U	Y	L	B	W	S	O	O	Z	R	M	Z	V	Z	X
Fleshy	G	G	I	O	N	J	O	T	B	O	I	M	A	U	O
Fruit	H	D	R	J	Y	R	M	R	S	A	N	X	T	R	U
Fungi	E	B	U	B	H	T	K	Q	P	M	A	T	U	N	F
Fungus	C	W	D	S	C	R	O	L	V	O	F	M	D	B	U
Ground	V	G	U	B	O	E	F	I	N	D	W	E	H	Z	N
Human	N	M	W	U	O	E	E	R	N	G	R	D	A	P	G
Kingdom	G	A	R	E	T	A	W	S	U	N	X	Q	T	F	I
Mushroom	Y	K	M	F	L	E	S	H	Y	I	Z	E	U	E	Z
Plant	D	A	X	U	P	L	A	N	T	K	T	N	N	X	E
Roots	G	J	Q	W	H	D	N	U	O	R	G	X	W	W	X
Tree	Z	R	I	F	S	C	A	H	T	U	K	N	M	B	S
Under	D	S	M	M	J	O	K	W	S	H	J	U	M	V	A
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 2025 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



## Keeping the Family in Farm Continuation Takes Thoughtful Action

Our family farm hosted our small town's first-ever all-class school reunion this summer. Kudos to the alumni on the organizing committee, who gathered 350 graduates and guests for this "Fest on the Farm." That's a big party in the farm shop for one of the smallest schools in the state.

In that crowd, four of us claimed the most living generations in attendance: My grandma, dad, daughter and I. Two factors contributed to this four-generation achievement. My grandparents and parents had babies at 20 years old, and we dedicated ourselves to the family farm, a business rooted in that small school district.

Farming is inherently generational, a family business transferred through successive heirs to create a profound sense of legacy and identity while preserving traditions, values and relevant practices. The livelihood generates a way of life that binds us to the land and our communities, evidenced by the four-generation photo we captured at the reunion.

This story resonates across the state, where families, not corporations, control ownership for 96% of the 71,000 farms in Illinois. Family members make decisions that steward the land and care for the animals. They carry out the work, uphold the commitment to community and inherit the responsibility to plan for the next generation. My brother and I feel gravity in that obligation and commit thoughtful planning to improve the likelihood of a successful transition.

Soon, we will attend a meeting where one of the agenda topics explores strategies to attract, integrate and position the farm for our kids. The complex undertaking must navigate legal and financial challenges. It must consider their talents and the farm's resources while defining their roles. And we insist the process cultivates a leadership mindset to respect shared values and facilitate strong and healthy family dynamics.

A deeply emotional connection draws our kids' hearts to the family business as it did ours. At the core of their childhood, they experienced four generations of family working the fields together at harvest. The kids formed a close-knit cousin bond baling straw and playing hide and seek on the farm. Grandparents teach them trade skills, expose them to family traditions, make farm life fun and showcase the values of respect, integrity, hard work and reliability.

While those ideals create a framework, successful sustainability of the business will require structure, strategy and a shared commitment. It's a daunting task to make sure they know the history of risk and sacrifice that afforded the opportunity, that we allot time for the transfer of skills and we teach them to be adaptive. The consideration of time-tested techniques with new ideas and technologies is imperative for the business to thrive.

At the all-school reunion, the contrast between a 1954 Farmall and a 2024 CaseIH tractor on display strikingly reflected the 71-year span of graduates in attendance. Farming, like education, has evolved far beyond the visible changes of barns and equipment or textbooks and one-room schoolhouses. Successful continuity upholds the values that endure through time while also embracing innovation and change to remain relevant.

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



## YOUNG LEADER SPOTLIGHT: DOUG YUNKER

Doug Yunker, along with his wife, Lexi, and daughter, Sadie, live in Peotone. Doug farms alongside his father, growing organic and GMO corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay in Will and southern Cook counties. When Doug isn't working, he enjoys snow skiing, boating, and hanging out with his family.

One of Doug's favorite farm memories is riding in the tractor and disking a field with his grandpa when he was 10 years old.

Doug attended Cook County Farm Bureau events with his father growing up. Once the idea to start the Young Leaders Committee

came about, Doug joined the group.

To someone considering joining Young Leaders, Doug would tell them that this is a great opportunity to meet other young people interested in agriculture while enhancing their leadership skills. Doug has really enjoyed learning about the other members' unique roles in agriculture and participating in various volunteer activities.

**To learn more about the Young Leaders Committee contact Bona at [bona@cookcfb.org](mailto:bona@cookcfb.org).**

## Another Benefit of Maintaining Your Membership . . .

### Farm Bureau Membership just keeps getting better!

Have you visited the Illinois Farm Bureau Partners website lately? Content convenient and topical for all Farm Bureau members.

- Improved mobile, laptop, and desktop functionality
- Easier access to the most popular content
- More prominent videos

- Bigger, bolder photos
- More convenient access to podcasts

The Partners website, quarterly magazine, and weekly podcast feature the best of Illinois farm-, family- and food-related people, places, and events. Each component of the Partners franchise recognizes the partnerships and shared values that exist among rural, suburban, and urban Illinois.

**Go to <https://ilfbpartners.com/magazine/> to check out the online version.**



## Future

Continued from Page 1

These intentional efforts to serve Cook County Farm Bureau members in a more complete, immersive way will complement the organization's consistent focus on serving farmers, urban growers, greenhouse producers, specialty crop growers, landowners, and those seeking to successfully enter the world of agriculture.

The organization continues its Future Forward initiative that was approved in 2024 and provides a leadership pathway and growth plan for young agriculturalists and members. The plan is a strategy to recruit, train, engage, and develop younger individuals with an interest in farming and agriculture for enhanced industry involvement in the future.

The Cook County Farm Bureau strategic plan approved by the Board of Directors in February 2025 includes:

### 1. Membership

- Member recruitment and retention
- Member benefits, discounts, and programming

- "All are welcome at our table" – expand membership appeal
- Farmer direct to consumer marketing

### 2. Public outreach

- Agricultural information communications
- Agricultural knowledge in consumers
- Agriculture literacy in schools

### 3. Younger member engagement

- Leadership development
- CCFB Foundation resources and support

### 4. Agricultural issues and support

- Lobbying and local affairs involvement
- Urban and innovative agricultural issues and support
- Political Action Committee outreach

### 5. Growing and developing strategic partners and stakeholders

- Outreach regarding consumer information
- Membership development
- Policy implementation

# Manifolds, Manolos, and Manure

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



Bona Heinsohn

## Harvesting Success in Cook County

As the county's largest general farm organization, Cook County Farm Bureau® is dedicated to bridging the gap between farmers and urban consumers. Through education programs targeting youth and their

parents and programs designed to connect farmers with potential consumers, Farm Bureau members are actively engaging in conversations about food and the shared values between farmers and consumers.

An aspect of this is building opportunities for farmers, especially members, to expand or enhance their farming operations within the county. To that end, Farm Bureau's role is to advocate for and educate legislative leaders about the diversity of the agricultural industry in Cook County.

Cook County is home to everything from rooftop gardens to massive food manufacturing plants and everything in between. On top of that, the region ranks\*:

- First for livestock and poultry employment,
- Second for crop-related jobs, and
- First for all other agriculture-related jobs.

Altogether, agriculture supports over 110,000 jobs in Cook County, the highest of any county in Illinois. That's a three percent jump in just a few years.

Cook County Farm Bureau is actively advocating and working for enhanced farming opportunities for farmers of all sizes and farm types, including:

- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) Resolution 24-0817 sponsored by Commissioner Cam Davis, which supports urban agriculture and calls on other local units of government to apply for MWRD programs to expand and support urban agriculture opportunities. District programs include the Green Infrastructure Partnership Program, which can be a potential funding source for urban agriculture projects that meet MWRD's stormwater criteria and the Real Estate program, which makes vacant District real estate available for lease to both commercial and governmental entities, including urban agriculture and community gardens.
- Expansion of farming opportunities on Cook County Forest Preserve property and the elimination of crop restrictions to allow for innovative crops and farming practices.
- Cook County Resolution 25-1792, sponsored by Commissioner Scott Britton, which recognizes and celebrates National Agriculture Day, a day to celebrate the contributions of farmers and the farm products they grow and raise.

- Chicago Ordinance 02025-0018235 which calls for the sale of city property in the Pullman neighborhood and for the property to be repurposed as the We Sow We Grow urban agriculture district. This project would include an education farm, a production farm, a Zen garden, and an orchard near the intersection of 120th Street and Union Avenue. In light of Farm Bureau policy #49 Urban Agriculture, which was developed and proposed by Cook County Farm Bureau in 2021, Farm Bureau supported the ordinance. Policy #49 supports the inclusion of urban agriculture into land developments and encourages the use of land management tools to create urban agriculture areas. The policy also recognizes the economic value and importance of urban agriculture to the economy.

A fundamental aspect of Cook County Farm Bureau is the organization's commitment to advancing farming opportunities.

*\*Sources*

2022 Census of Agriculture, released on February 13, 2024. The census surveyed changes in land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, and income and expenditures from 2017 to 2022.

2023 Feeding the Economy

2024 Decision Innovation Solutions Economic Contribution Study. The survey was conducted by Decision Innovation Solutions for the Institute for Feed Education and Research and examined categories within agriculture.

## Resolutions Committee Advances CFB's H-2A Proposal

Adapted from FarmWeek July 28, 2025

Farm Bureau delegates in December will tackle policy issues ranging from farm labor to wildlife management to postal service delays.

Resolutions Committee members, which include 18 county presidents and the Illinois Farm Bureau® Young Leader vice chair, met in July to consider 33 policy submittals from nine counties and a Regenerative Ag Working Group. They advanced 22 proposals and held two for more information.

IFB Vice President Evan Hultine, who chairs the committee, described the discussion as "full and robust."

**"The meeting highlights the value of the Resolutions Committee and process as all areas of the state were represented in those great discussions," Hultine said. "I'm proud and appreciative of our county Farm Bureaus for the work they're doing."**

### H-2A program

One of the proposals advanced by the committee streamlines Farm Bureau's H-2A policy and also adds some new language.

With the H-2A temporary visa program continuing to grow as farmers struggle to find domestic workers, Cook County Farm Bureau proposed an update to existing labor policy that provides flexibility to H-2A program changes while addressing membership barriers to utilization of the program.

The proposal adds the word "administration" to the H-2A Work Program heading, and adds new points in support of:

- Clarity in H-2A regulations and administration
- Streamlining the H-2A application process by using electronic application filing
- Allowing employers to file a single application for labor needs, even if labor needs are staggered throughout the year
- Removing the "seasonality" requirement to make all agricultural jobs eligible
- Lengthening the term of stay for workers
- A quicker, less intensive application process for hiring H-2A workers if the farm has had no changes from the previous year

The proposal also moves several existing points under the Work Program heading to a newly proposed H-2A Work Program Operations heading, while adding that Farm Bureau supports more flexibility for agricultural employers in the H-2A program, and allowing an H-2A worker with time remaining on their visa to work on other qualified farms, if the original farm requesting the employee no longer has work.

"(The proposal) is simplifying our policy ... looking at the actual operations of the H-2A workers, of when they're here, how can we use them, when can we use them, what are the guidelines

around that, and just really looking at our policy book, streamlining it and making it better organized for legislators when they look at it," said Jake Armstrong, Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau president and chair of the Agricultural Production and National Issues subcommittee.

Delegates also will consider deleting language opposing increased state minimum wage and adverse effect wage requirements and replacing it with Farm Bureau opposes the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) being above the state minimum wage. The proposal also includes a point that the organization opposes additional state regulations that add application processing delays.

The AEWR's vary by state, and are the minimum wage for foreign farmworkers admitted temporarily into the U.S. on H-2A visas. The Labor Department sets rates to prevent the influx of foreign labor from lowering wages for U.S. workers.

This year, nationwide rates increased by an average of more than 4%. The 2025 wage rate for field and livestock workers in Illinois is \$19.57 an hour- an increase of \$1.39. During FY 2024, 5,198 H-2A workers were registered in the state, which was an increase of 398 workers over the previous year.

**Members with questions or concerns are encouraged to contact Bona Heinsohn at [bona@cookcfb.org](mailto:bona@cookcfb.org).**



## Experts Offer Practical Nutrient Management Strategies

Dr. Andrew Margenot (pictured left) with the University of Illinois discusses crop nutrient management practices and opportunities with attendees at the Cook County Farm Bureau Field Days at Smits Farm in Sauk Village.

Margenot is pictured with Carl Smits, farm owner and Field Days host. Smits Farm has hosted nutrient management research in partnership with the Margenot Group for numerous years. Support for the Nutrient Stewardship Field Day and nutrient research is provided through the Illinois Farm Bureau® Nutrient Stewardship Grant, which Cook CFB has received since 2021.



## Field Days Participants Experience Plasticulture First-Hand

Carl Smits with Smits Farm discusses growing plants using plasticulture with participants at this year's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Field Days. Plasticulture is the practice of using plastic materials in agricultural production to modify the growing environment and improve crop yields. It can involve using plastic mulches, row covers, greenhouses, and irrigation systems.

# CCFB Photo Contest: FALL PHOTOS

Get your camera and capture moments by showcasing your best photos depicting the theme of Agriculture in the Fall. Send in your photos – selfies, pictures of others, landscape, etc.

The deadline for Fall photos is **October 15**.

The winning photos will be posted in the November *Co-Operator*.

### Example Categories for Fall:

Pumpkin Picking, Apple Picking, Hayrides, and more!

**Prizes:** Each season will have three winners.

- 1st place:** \$100 cash
- 2nd place:** \$40 Farm Fresh Funds\*
- 3rd place:** \$25 Farm Fresh Funds\*

All participating photos will be featured on our website and social media.

The contest is open to all members in good standing.

Go to <https://bit.ly/4jyhUWV> to submit entries.

*\*Farm Bureau Farm Fresh Funds are funds that can be redeemed at local farmstands, greenhouses, and garden centers just as you would use cash.*

## New Orland Park District Leader Selected

Effective September 1, Sharon Stemke will be the District Leader for Orland Park.

Stemke has been with Country Financial for over 17 years where she started as an Employee financial representative in the North Will South DuPage Agency. After a few years she took on her role as Agency Associate Manager for South Holland/Frankfort Agency. She served as Agency Manager of Chicago Northeast Agency. She then became the Agency Manager for Chicago South and continued as District Leader when the job responsibilities were updated. Previous to her career at Country, Sharon had over 15 years Banking/Lending experience including 10 years as an Assistant Vice President of a Financial Institution.



**SHARON STEMKE**

*"As a COUNTRY Financial District Leader, I'm looking to continue building a team of individuals who will thrive helping COUNTRY Financial clients protect what and who they love and prepare for their financial future." – Sharon Stemke*

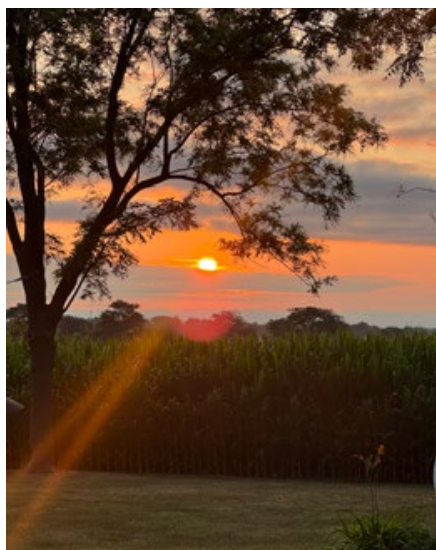
## CONGRATULATIONS to the SUMMER Photo Contest Winners:

### 1st Place Winner:



*"Munching My Way to Monarch"*  
By: Carol Falk

### 2nd Place Winner:



*"Sunrise Over Corn"*  
By: Jessica McCabe

### 3rd Place Winner:



*"Monarch Butterfly Feeding on a Meadow Blazing Star, Showy Blazing Star Liatris"* By: Pamela Bruns

Check out all the Summer photos at <https://cookcfb.org/membership/ccfb-photo-contest>

## CCFB Provides Comments in Support of Wagner Farm

As the Glenview Park District considers the Wagner Farm Master Plan, Cook County Farm Bureau sent the following letter in support of the farm and the dairy operations at the farm:

*In a county once dotted by farmers and the black and white façade of dairy cattle, Historic Wagner Farm is now the last working dairy farm in Cook County. The 18.6-acre farm not only boosts a working dairy operation but also provides urban families with a connection to local agriculture that would not exist without this unique aspect of the Glenview Park District.*

*The farm offers families from throughout the area the opportunity to experience a living history museum, animal interactions, interactive exhibits, farm stand, hands-on activities, ice cream shop, and fresh produce sold onsite and through community supported agriculture (CSA).*

*Cook County Farm Bureau®, through our Agriculture in the Classroom program, routinely partners with Wagner Farm to offer irreplaceable educational opportunities, promote agricultural literacy, and foster meaningful connections between urban and rural communities. Students and families benefit from this tremendous relationship.*

*As the Glenview Park District prepares to review the Wagner Farm Master Plan, we wanted to communicate our strong support for the plan and for the continuation and expansion of dairy operations at the farm.*

*Recent concerns raised by animal rights activists do not reflect the values or practices upheld at Wagner Farm. The staff and caretakers at the farm demonstrate a consistent commitment to humane animal treatment, responsible farming practices, and transparency. The animals are cared for under professional oversight,*

*following best practices for health, nutrition, and welfare. These operations also comply with local, state, and federal standards for livestock care.*

*Wagner Farm plays a critical role in helping children and adults understand where their food comes from, how animals contribute to our food system, and the importance of ethical farming. It offers a rare hands-on experience for youth and families who might otherwise never see a dairy cow or learn how milk is produced. This exposure builds appreciation, not only for agriculture but also for the people and animals involved in feeding our communities.*

*While it is essential to listen to and consider public concerns, the solution should not be to eliminate educational livestock programs, but rather to continue to operate them with openness, responsibility, and care. Discontinuing dairy operations would be a significant loss to the region's agricultural heritage and public understanding of food systems.*

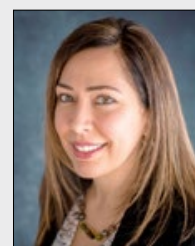
*Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. We urge you to maintain and increase the dairy operations at Wagner Farm as a vital resource for education, connection, and community enrichment.*

*As the county's largest general farm organization, Cook County Farm Bureau® is dedicated to bridging the gap between farmers and urban consumers. Through education programs targeting youth and their parents and programs designed to connect farmers with potential consumers, Farm Bureau members are actively engaging in conversations about food and the shared values between farmers and consumers.*

Wagner Farm's Master Plan was approved in August. Farm Bureau leadership provided testimony in support of the farm and plan during the meeting.

## Cook County Agents of the Month

The Agent of the Month program is designed by COUNTRY® Financial District Leaders 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 District Leaders with the Agent of the Month designation.



### KAREN KAVALAS

has been named Agent of the Month for July 2025. Karen's office is located at 4845 167th St, Oak Forest, IL. Her phone number is 708-596-0008. Karen has been a Financial

Representative with COUNTRY® Financial since May 2020. **Orland Park Agency, Sharon Stemke, District Leader**



### MARGARET JURA

has been named Agent of the Month for July 2025. Margaret's office is located at 6136 N Milwaukee Ave, Suite F, Chicago, IL. Her phone number is 773-631-9107.

Margaret has been an agent with COUNTRY® Financial since January 2008. **Chicago North Agency, Vicki Nygren, District Leader**



### BRETT RIEKENA

has been named Agent of the Month of July 2025. Brett's office is located at 110 N. Brockway, Palatine, IL. His phone number is 847-383-4321. Brett has been a Financial

Representative with COUNTRY® Financial since May 2011. **Chicago Northwest Agency, Matt Huonder, District Leader.**

*\*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

18 position ladder, 16 ft, asking \$100. **Call 708-654-2010**. Picture available online.

I RIDE electric scooter new. Asking \$950, paid \$1,300. Weight 32 lbs. (base), length 38", width 19.25". **Call 708-654-2010**. Pictures available online.

Harley Davidson Motorcycle 2005 883 model, blue. Kept under flannel sheets, never washed, less than 1000 miles. Clean - cherry - cannot tell from new. \$5,000. **Call 708-784-1949**

Weber Grill. Performer charcoal grill in red. Never used. Garage kept. 2014 or 2015 year. Smoker attachment still in box. Cover still in box. Ace price \$580 + \$160 for smoker. Asking \$300 total. **Call 708-784-1949**.

Dining/Kitchen table 61" long x 41" wide. Dark oak. Comes with 2 leaves, 6 chairs with pads. \$100. Picture available online. **Call Chet 815-838-4764** Lockport.

End table medium oak 27" long x 21" wide x 22" high. Comes with lamp 34" high with gold color base that has 22" circle base \$50. Picture available online. **Call Chet 815-838-4764** Lockport

Entertainment center 76" high x 8' wide x 18 1/2" deep. Medium oak. Has storage space on each side with glass doors. \$100. Good condition. Picture available online. **Call Chet 815-838-4764** Lockport

Typewriters: Royal antique \$50, Royal electric \$30, Royal manual \$30, Smith Corona electric \$30. **Call Chet 815-838-4764** Lockport

2016 Dodge Grand Caravan. 6 cylinder, 67,000 miles. Asking \$8,900. Very clean, one owner, runs like new, retired and moving to Florida. **Call Louie 847-361-9292**.

Two metal three drawer office type file cabinets: (1) 36"L x 18"D x 39"H. (2) 42"L x 18"D x 39"H both in very good condition. Pick up in Arlington Heights only. \$25.00 each. **Contact Ron 847-577-6613**

2002 Dodge Dakota (SLT). 3.9L 6 cyl. Runs great. 140,000 miles, many new parts, interior like new, CD, cassette, FM/AM. Good work truck. \$4,000. **Call for more info 630-292-9388**.

### WANTED

Wanted 5 ft blow mold Santa, with or without light. **Call 708-439-9770**.

Wanted 1972 older cars, trucks, parts, unfinished projects, and 1967/69 Camaros. **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.

<b>This month</b> "O"	<b>OREGANO</b>	
Oregano is a shrub-like herb with multiple-branched stems, growing either upright or in a creeping manner.	<b>It can grow as tall as three feet in height.</b>	
<b>Oregano is said to have a 'balsamic' flavor; combination of mint (a closely related herb), thyme, and rosemary</b>	The leaves are narrow and pinnate, or arrow-shaped, and have a soft, fuzzy texture.	
	<b>Oregano is a good source of iron, manganese, vitamin K, fiber and calcium.</b>	
<b>The taste is strong and somewhat bitter.</b>	Oregano is a traditional Mediterranean herb and plays a prominent role in Greek and Italian cuisine.	
	<b>To the ancient Romans and Greeks, Oregano was seen as a symbol for happiness and joy.</b>	

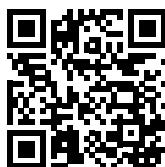
Source: [https://specialtyproduce.com/produce/Oregano\\_310.php](https://specialtyproduce.com/produce/Oregano_310.php)

## This Month in Cook County Agriculture

### Annual Fall Festival Days at Melka's Landscape & Garden Center in September.

Join us for three Saturdays of fall fun: September 13, 20, and 27, from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Fall festival fun includes horse rides, face painting, vendors, food trucks, planter workshops, and more.

Full details at: <https://www.jimmelkalandscaping.com/> or call 708-349-6989. Melka's is located at 11606 179th St., Mokena.



### Ted's Greenhouse and Foliage Guy present Foliage Fest - The Epic Plant Event.

Saturday, September 13, 2025 12-4 p.m.. The best plant and artisan vendors from all over the Midwest featuring raffles and giveaways, music, amazing food, drinks, snacks, and beverages.

Tickets on sale at the green house and at: <https://allevents.in/.../foliage-fest.../200027865255134>.



Ted's Greenhouse, 16930 84th Ave, Tinley Park

### Field Days hosted by: U of I Extension LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND SMALL FARMS Cook County Unit

- September 16: The Talking Farm, 5:00 -7:00 p.m. (Navigating FSA & NRCS Programs), Skokie
- October 14: We Sow We Grow, 4:30-6:30 p.m. (Navigating FSA & NRCS Programs), West Pullman, Chicago



Registration and details: <https://extension.illinois.edu/events/2025-09-16-nrcs-field-day-talking-farm>

### Cook DuPage Beekeepers Association Monthly Meetings

are open to all interested in beekeeping and bees. Join us at our next meeting on Saturday, September 20 at 6:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church at 300 Ardmore Avenue, Villa Park. The church has a parking lot for your convenience. We hope to see you there, but if you can't make it, you can still join virtually. We'll have giveaways for those who attend in person.

To promote your activity, email [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) or call 708-354-3276 by the 15th 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.

## Discover Local This Fall!

Fall is here and it's the time for fall items like pumpkins, gourds, popcorn, fall flowers, hay straw, and fresh harvest vegetables. The time is ripe to experience a classic fall outing to a local pumpkin patch, go apple picking, or trail riding! The Cook County Farm Bureau wants to help by making it easier for you to shop locally and support businesses in and around your community with **Discover Local**. This section is a MUST-HAVE resource where you will find diverse local food and agriculture businesses in Cook County, local farmers' markets, and more to help with fall purchases, local food, and fall fun experiences!



Scan the QR Code to visit the Discover Local PDF Online!

## The Answer: Yes – Yes, You can!

**The Question: Can I retain my membership even though Country Financial says I do not need a membership to access insurance?**

Members are a part of the Farm Bureau family. Farmers are strong, resilient, faithful, generous, and hardworking. Continue to be a part of this wonderful family and community.

We have been pleasantly surprised by how many people ask us that question and we want to assure current members (even impleore current members) that . . .

**We love our members and renewals**

**We love serving your membership needs through humor, great information, programming, membership discounts, local farmer support, and so much more.**

**We even answer the phone!**

# 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**

## Farm Crawl Bingo

The Cook County Farm Bureau is sponsoring its 8th member FARM CRAWL of participating member Ag locations later this summer. Our Bingo inspired self-guided tour will offer plenty of time to visit locations, filling our BINGO location card for our Raffle Entry of cash and prizes, along the way.



**LOCATIONS:** Participating member Ag businesses and farms located on Bingo Board

**DATE:** Through September 13th, 2025 **TIME:** See Bingo Card

**BINGO CARD:** BINGO board containing crawl details and locations via:



- Download online at: <https://cookcfb.org/stay-updated-/events-and-programs/programs-and-events/profile/farm-crawl>
- Email [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) for a Bingo card or Via Mail - call the CCFB office 708-354-3276

## 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 the Friday prior

**DATE:** Monday, September 15, 2025 **TIME:** 4:00-4:30 p.m. 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.

## Cook CFB Booth at Foliage Fest

Join the CCFB at Foliage Fest on Saturday, September 13, where we will promote membership, answer member benefit questions, sell Soil Test Kits, and more. Kids can do an Ag inspired activity all while shopping the best plant and artisan vendors from all over the Midwest. The fest will have raffles, giveaways, music, amazing food, drinks, and snacks.



**LOCATION:** Foliage Fest at Ted's Greenhouse, 16930 84th Ave, Tinley Park

**DATE:** Saturday, September 13, 2025 **TIME:** 12:00-4:00 p.m.

**REGISTRATION:** Event Tickets can be purchased at Ted's Greenhouse and online at: <https://allevents.in/tinley-park/foliage-fest-2025-the-epic-plant-event-tickets/200027865255134>



## Intro to Organic Candle Making

Join Soapy Roads of Lombard for a 'Clean Candle' Workshop and Candle Makery Bar where you will craft your own custom candle. Soapy Roads will provide the clean ingredients which include phthalate-free fragrance oils blended with essential oils, organically grown soy wax base, lead-free wicks, and an 8oz fill glass vessel. Learn why cheap candles can be dangerous and techniques for getting the best life and safe burning out of your candle.



**LOCATION:** Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Rd., Countryside

**DATE:** Tuesday, September 16, 2025 **TIME:** 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**FEE:** \$22 for members, \$25 for non-members

**REGISTRATION:** Call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276 or go online to the Member Center at [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org).

## DIY "Fall" Barn Quilt Painting Workshop

Learn about the history of barn quilts and paint your own FALL design during this 3-hour make-and-take workshop. A barn quilt is a piece of wood, painted in simple geometric patterns to resemble a quilting block that is hung on the exterior of a building. During this beginner-level class, you will paint a 12x12 barn quilt design on wood to hang indoors.

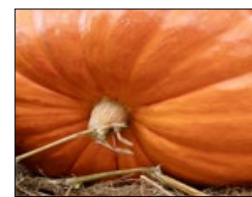


**LOCATION:** Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Rd., Countryside

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 1, 2025 **TIME:** 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. **FEE:** \$20 for CCFB members, \$25 for non-members (includes materials: board, stencil, paint, apron, etc.)

**REGISTRATION:** Call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276 or at the Member Center. For additional information, email Kelli at [membershipkelli@cookcfb.org](mailto:membershipkelli@cookcfb.org).

## 25th Giant Pumpkin, Dessert, Carving, Local Honey Contest – Register Now!



Giant pumpkin growers, bakers, carvers, and beekeepers, this is the contest for you! Adult and youth (under 16 yrs) divisions. The contest is free for members and registration is required. Cash prizes are awarded in all categories.

**LOCATION:** Puckerville Farms, 13332 Bell Rd, Lemont

**DATE:** Saturday, October 4, 2025 **TIME:** 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. *(9 a.m. registration/check-in)*

**REGISTRATION:** Call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276, online at the Member Center at [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org). Registration form and full program details at: <https://cookcfb.org/stay-updated/upcoming-events>.

**ENTRY FEE:** Free for Members, Non-members may enter by joining CCFB.

**RULES:** Contest open to any CCFB member & dependents. **Check in by 9:15 a.m. to be considered; must be present to win.**

**JUDGING:** Members of the Commodities/Marketing Team will serve as judges. The decision of the judges is final.

### Giant Pumpkin Weigh in Contest

**Divisions:** Adult and Youth (16 and younger)

**Rules:** Contest open to CCFB members and their dependents. One pumpkin grown per person may be entered into the contest.

**Prizes (Adult):**

- 1st Place: \$250
- 2nd Place: \$150
- 3rd Place: \$75

**Prizes (Youth):**

- 1st Place: \$100
- 2nd Place: \$75
- 3rd Place: \$50



### REGISTER ONLINE

Scan the QR code or visit: <http://cookcfb.org/stay-updated/upcoming-events>

### Homemade Pumpkin Dessert Contest

**Rules:** Contest open to any CCFB member/dependents; open to all ages and must be present to win. Dessert will be judged by appearance, taste, and texture.

**Prizes:**

- 1st Place - \$100
- 2nd Place - \$50
- 3rd Place - \$25

### Home Grown Local Honey Contest

**Rules:** Contest open to CCFB or CDBA members/dependents and open to all ages. Honey judging criteria will be provided once registered, prior to contest.

**Prizes:**

- 1st Place - \$100
- 2nd Place - \$50
- 3rd Place - \$25

### Pumpkin Carving Contest

**Division:** Ages 16 & up members and their dependents

**Rules:** Pumpkin will be provided by CCFB; free hand carving only, no patterns allowed. Carvers will have 1 hour to carve using their own carving tools.

**Prizes:**

- 1st Place - \$100
- 2nd Place - \$50
- 3rd Place - \$25

### Youth Fun Contest

Guess The Weight of the Pumpkin! Contest open to anyone 16 yrs and younger in 3 age categories.

**Prizes:**

- 1st Place & Runner up prize in each age group

**Mail, Email, Phone or Fax entry form to:**

**Mail:** Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Rd Ste 101, Countryside, IL 60525

**Email:** [ccfb@cookcfb.org](mailto:ccfb@cookcfb.org) | **Phone:** 708-354-3276 | **Fax:** 708-579-6056

## Cheese and Halloween Candy Pairing

**Presented by Meredith Meder, ACS CCP**

Get in the spirit of Halloween when we pair up classic trick-or-treat candy with cheese. From Kit Kats to candy corn, there's a pairing for everyone!



**LOCATION:** Cook CFB, 6438 Joliet Rd. Countryside, Lower Level Conference Room

**DATE:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 **TIME:** 7:00-8:30 p.m.

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

**FEE:** \$18 for CCFB members, \$20 for non-members

## Holiday Wreath & Bow Making at CCFB Register Now!

Join us at the CCFB and create your own holiday wreath and bow for your home this coming season. Patrick Horcher, owner of Horchers Flower Shop & Garden Center, will lead us in creating your own creation for home. Refreshments and merriment included!



**LOCATION:** Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Rd, Countryside

**DATE:** Tuesday, November 18, 2025 **TIME:** 6:00-7:30 p.m.

**REGISTRATION:** Call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276, online at the Member Center at [www.cookcfb.org](http://www.cookcfb.org).

**FEE:** \$25 for CCFB members, \$30 for non-members