

2025

COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT

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AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM
2024-2025
SCHOOL YEAR

24,129

STUDENTS REACHED THROUGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

1,075

CLASSROOMS REACHED

208

SCHOOLS RECEIVED AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Our eight Ag in the Classroom presenters conducted in-person presentations to students throughout Cook County. Presentation topics included Intro to Illinois Ag, There's Ag on MyPlate, and programs about soil, specialty crops, the farm-to-table process, ag careers, and keeping warm with agriculture.

During my time as a student, I am learning valuable lessons on why agriculture is so important. I wouldn't have received this amazing schooling if it wasn't for you at the Cook County Farm Bureau. You have believed in me these last few years and I appreciate it!

From Elijah Floerke, a recipient of the CCFB Foundation Scholarship Program

2025 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Board of Directors of the Cook County Farm Bureau® Foundation selected ten individuals as recipients of the 2025 Scholarship Program. A total of \$25,000 in scholarship funds were distributed. Our program offers several scholarships including vocational and adult scholarships. All of our scholarships are available to members, dependents, and others seeking a major in agriculture, agribusiness, or an agriculturally-related course of study with intent on an agriculturally-related career.

The Howard Paarlberg Excellence in Agriculture Scholarship honoring the Foundation's first president, Howard Paarlberg, carries the highest financial award and is given to the top-rated applicant.

"Moving Ag Forward" Vocational Ag Career Training Scholarship has been designed for individuals and CCFB members pursuing training in agriculture-related skills.

The Stuenkel Family Scholarship assists students pursuing higher education with a focus on an agriculturally-related career in the areas of technology, education, leadership development, and/or mental health.



ELIJAH FLOERKE
HOWARD PAARLBERG SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



BRIGID HELLER
STUENKEL FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



DANIEL LYONS



GRAHAM BREAKER



JENNIFER MILLER



LEAH SHEEHAN



LILLIANA BERNABEI



MATTHEW SMITS



MEGHAN CZERWINSKI



SOPHIA ROY



A **Farm Shadow Program** was held at Ted's Greenhouse on April 15. Farm Shadow Programs allow middle and high school students to gain insight into potential agricultural careers through classroom presentations and field trips. A horticultural Farm Shadow Program was held for 21 students from the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. The students, juniors in their school's horticulture pathway, learned about greenhouse operations, toured the greenhouse, learned about propagation and seed starting, and participated in a make-and-take planter activity. The focus of the program was agricultural careers and real-life application to the topics learned through hands-on activities.

Today's presentation was full of hands-on learning and exciting discoveries! One of the biggest highlights for our class was learning all about corn and seeds—and just how important they are to Illinois agriculture and our everyday lives....This experience connected perfectly to our economy unit, helping students understand the journey from farm to table and how agriculture supports nutrition, business, and community.

Feedback from a Cook County 4th grade teacher after an Agriculture in the Classroom presentation.

FUTURE FORWARD

In April 2024, the Cook County Farm Bureau Board of Directors approved a leadership development and growth plan called Future Forward. The plan outlined an intentional 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. Since then, CCFB's Future Forward has been successful at:

- Encouraging the establishment of collegiate farm bureau programs within Cook County
- Supporting Cook County's Young Leader Committee, which provides opportunities for younger members to learn more about the organization and participate in programs and activities to benefit themselves and other members

This past year, CCFB Young Leaders:

- Connected with Young Leaders in Wake County, NC
- Three Young Leaders graduated from the 2025 Class of Illinois Farm Bureau's Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow: Kayla Biegel, British Griffis, and Katrina Milton
- Two Young Leaders graduated from the 2025 Class of the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Program: British Griffis and Rebecca Biernacki
- Held a public speaking training event at the CCFB in March 2025
- Attended events including the Illinois Ag Industry Tour in July 2025, the 2025 Illinois Young Leader Conference, the 2024 District and State Discussion Meet, the Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference, and the 2024 IAA Annual Meeting



AG DAY

Ag Day North was held March 18 at Historic Wagner Farm in Glenview. Approximately 70 third grade students from Palmer Elementary School in Chicago visited the farm to learn about what life was like in the 1920s. Making butter, learning how to pump water, and learning about livestock through hands-on experiences were some of the highlights of their field trip.



Ag Day South was held April 3 at the Children's Farm in Palos Park and featured stations about chickens, cows, sheep, pigs, horses, horticulture, bees/honey, and vermicomposting. Approximately 265 students and 50 teachers/chaperones attended.



2025 COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU AITC SUMMER INTERN

The CCFB Foundation has hired 18 college interns since 2022 for summer AITC program assistance.

Elizabeth "Libby" Heenan, a Senior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying agriculture education, was the 2025 Cook County Ag in the Classroom Summer Intern.

This summer, I've had the incredible opportunity to travel around my hometown and the rest of Cook County, educating people of all ages about the importance of agriculture, as well as who the farm bureau is and what we do! ... I can't help but feel grateful for all the growth and skills I've gained. Every day I spend at the farm bureau fuels my passion for agricultural education. I'm really excited to inspire others, especially those in urban areas, to see just how important agriculture is in our lives and to show them that there's a place for everyone in this industry.

SPONSORING EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Programming went beyond our traditional classroom programs with multiple educational events held throughout Cook County. Events held this past year included career days at middle and high schools, library programs, Pollinator Week events at Lincoln Park and Brookfield Zoos, Elk Grove Park District's Dairy Day, and Historic Wagner Farm's Livestock Show. The Foundation also sponsored annual disguise a turkey and bookmark art contests.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Ag Literacy Program offered multiple virtual workshops for educators. Topics included ag innovation and soil science, including composting, seed germination, and sustainability. In February, an Earth Day workshop was held for 60 teachers of District 104 in Summit/Bedford Park as part of the school district's institute day.

This year's Summer Ag Institute theme was "Cook County's Ag Connections to Historic Route 66 and Transportation." During SAI's two-day workshops, 16 teachers learned about Route 66, agricultural modes of transportation, including bridges and waterways, and biofuels, including ethanol and biodiesel.

AG LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The 2024 Ag Leadership Academy for FFA students was held Oct. 29. A total of 20 students attended: 10 from Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences and 10 from Lyons Township High School. This year's ALA theme was urban agriculture, and students learned about aquaponics, hydroponics, composting, greenhouses, raised bed growing, and agricultural careers.



WE NEED YOUR VALUABLE SUPPORT!

With your donation, the CCFB Foundation can continue its key programs which include scholarships for those who are pursuing higher education in the agriculture field, internships, sponsorships of various agricultural literacy programming activities in schools in the Cook County area and more! We can only manage this through supporters like you! We would like to thank those that consistently remember the Foundation's efforts with a financial gift annually. All donations are greatly appreciated!

Check out our Foundation Video to hear directly from members of the Foundation Board and past scholarship recipients: bit.ly/3z89zaT.



Thank you for your donation! We appreciate the donors who gave generously this past fiscal year to support our agricultural education mission. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/4mejW09 to view a listing of 2024-2025 donors.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DONATION

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Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other: _____

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Card# _____ Exp: _____ Signature: _____

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MAILING A CHECK TO
**6438 Joliet Rd., Ste 101
 Countryside, IL 60525**

VISITING OUR WEBSITE AT
cookcfb.org/foundation-

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708-354-3276