



COOK COUNTY GO-OPERATOR

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

Mark Your Calendar



December

15 Membership Monday PG 12

January

13 & 27 Zoom Book Club PG 12

Small Business Owner Webinar
Rescheduled PG 12

February

10 & 24 Zoom Book Club PG 12

21 & 22 Beginning Beekeeping PG 12

For participation details on these programs and activities, check out the related information in this publication, go to 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.

Question of the Month



Cook County Farm Bureau welcomed a new member business and is pleased to announce what new member benefit?

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

November Winner: Michael O'Brien

Question: What is the official state snack of Illinois?

Answer: Popcorn

Word of the Week



We always enjoy the opportunity to talk with our members, and we believe those who called enjoy it as well!

Read the *Co-Operator* carefully to find the word and the date to call in as it will be in a different spot each month.

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

November Winner: Mary Pecora

November word was Turkey found on P11.

Start your search for the December word today!

WREATH & BOW MAKING at the Farm Bureau!



Pat Horcher, instructing 22 members in creating wreaths and bows.



Friends, neighbors, and former colleagues gathered to create their wreaths & bows, laughing and enjoying one another: Bella, Donna, Mary and Linda (L to R).

On November 18, 22 members got into the holiday spirit by attending a fun and festive Wreath & Bow Making class held at the Farm Bureau. Carols were streaming while members created beautiful fresh personalized wreaths and bows for their homes.

The class was led by industry expert and Farm Bureau Board member, Pat Horcher, owner of Horcher Farms in Wheeling. Those attending wearing holiday apparel were entered into a special raffle adding to the festivities, making it a memorable evening.

College Students / Adults Apply Now 2026 Foundation Scholarships

If you're looking to pursue one of the many careers available in the agriculture industry, Cook County Farm Bureau has scholarships opportunities to support your journey!

Careers in agriculture include farming, 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, is related to agriculture. 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 28th 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. The scholarship applications are evaluated, scored and ranked for selection.

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 the top qualified applicants pursuing agriculturally related careers.

The Deadline for these Applications is February 17, 2026.

Visit www.cookcfb.org/foundation for more information on these scholarships and to apply.

Continue Reading "Scholarships" on Page 4

Children's Books Make Great Stocking Stuffers

By Kevin Daugherty

You can't go wrong with a book this holiday season, especially if it has agriculture connections! Check out these new-to-you books as reviewed by Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom.

The Soil in Jackie's Garden (978-1948898164) by Peggy Thomas (K-4th). You can't miss with this book highlighting gardening, composting and soil. This book was featured at the IAA Foundation booth at IFB's Annual Meeting.

Memory Garden (978-1250843036) by Zohreh Ghahremani (PreK-3rd). Visiting Nana's garden combines the past and present with great connections and discovery.

Flower Talk: How Plants Use Color to Communicate (978-1541519282) by Sara Levine (2nd-5th). Pollinators are so important to agriculture and this book showcases science in a unique nonfiction manner.

Continue Reading "Children's Books" on Page 6

Ag Book in a Box:

An AITC Immersive Experience for Families

This winter, take time to slow down and enjoy meaningful moments with family with Cook County Farm Bureau's Ag Book in a Box.

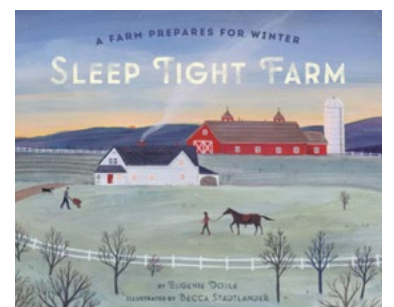
Centered around the heartwarming story "Sleep Tight Farm" by Eugenie Doyle, this immersive book in a box

experience brings agricultural learning to life with themed items, hands-on activities, crafts, and snacks. It's a fun and educational way for families to connect over the seasons of farming and the importance of agriculture.

Request your box online at bit.ly/Agbookbox or by calling the CCFB at 708-354-3276.

\$25 if shipped | \$20 if picked up from the CCFB

*For Farm Bureau Members Only!



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HOW FARM BUREAU SERVED YOU IN NOVEMBER

- ▶ **Engaged with county officials to discuss the multiple facets of Cook County agriculture.**
- ▶ **Assisted members in completing their 2026 Farmland Affidavit online.**
- ▶ **Hosted a Holiday Wreath & Bow Making class at the Farm Bureau where members learned from an industry expert creating beautiful wreaths and bows just in time for holiday decorating.**
- ▶ **Secured a new exclusive CCFB member discount benefit. Welcome member business, Chicago 24 Hour Towing, Inc.!**



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...

- Doug Yunker, Mark Yunker, Ruth Zeldenrust, Mike Rauch, and Janet McCabe for joining representatives from Kellanova for a farm visit and combine ride hosted by Cook County Young Leader Doug Yunker. Kellanova is a leading company in global snack foods, international cereal and noodles, plant-based foods, and North American frozen breakfast.
- Young Leaders who participated in the Cultivating Consensus: Leadership Training for Young Agriculturalists in November!
- The Garden Club of Morgan Park/Beverly Hills for inviting the Cook County Farm Bureau to speak at their November meeting and for joining!
- New member business, Chicago 24 Hour Towing, Inc.; thank you for offering a discount benefit to CCFB members.
- Patrick Horcher for travelling to the Farm Bureau and instructing members on how to create and make beautiful fresh wreaths & bows just in time for the holidays.
- The many members participating in the Question of the Month and the Ag Adventures Word Search each month, including 24 new Word Search participants this month! If you haven't submitted an entry before, December would be a good time to start! You can submit your entries by mail, email, fax, or deliver them in person to the office.
- Delegates Janet McCabe, Gerry Kopping, and Ruth Zeldenrust for willingly giving their time to review the delegate materials during the delegate listening session at the end of November in preparation for the IFB Annual Meeting.
- The many voting members that submitted a proxy for participation in the Cook County Farm Bureau Annual meeting.
- The many member volunteers that give their time, knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm to the Action Teams that develop, plan, and execute programs and activities for the benefit of the members of this organization. We look forward to working with you for another year!
- The many Voting and Associate members who have renewed their memberships for 2026!

Co-Operator

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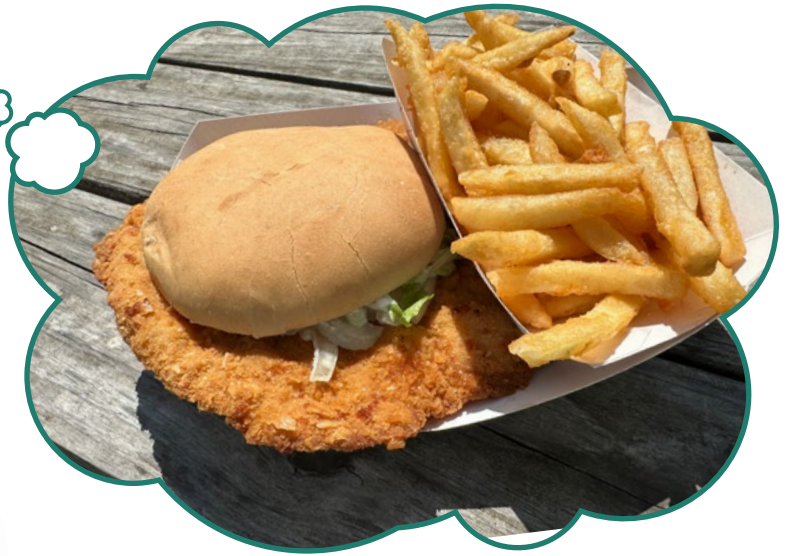
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Downwind

by **BOB ROHRER, CCFB MANAGER**



“Classic Christmas Column”

Ham – the White Christmas meat. A highlight course for Christmas dinner for me growing up on the farm. The GAR-DEN-ROH Farm specialized in pig production making Ham a given for the holiday feast. I can conjure up the smell of both types of pig aromas emanating from the farm even now as I write. Ham remains a key part of my Christmas dinner excellence expectations today.

I think back to that first year attending my wife’s family Christmas gathering. I wanted to impress and ingratiate myself to them (buy their love?). I brought bags of the perfect gifts (in my mind). 1/2 hams for everyone, my future Mother-in-law and each of my wife’s siblings. Nothing says Christmas like a chunk of meat. During the gift exchange, after opening the heavy gift bag, each of my wife’s family members seemed to struggle with words. Were they impressed? Overwhelmed with gratitude? Since that time, I can’t help noticing the ham gifts have never been mentioned again (I have noticed some whispering).

While Ham receives top billing for me during Christmas, another pork cut favorite bears mentioning the other 364 days of the year.

Hint: It is Fried. Breaded. Golden.

Yep. The breaded pork tenderloin. A hunk of pork loin hammered with a meat mallet and then dipped, breaded and deep fat fried in cooking oil – oh

my. Add dill pickles, ketchup, an extra bun or two with a side of fries or onion rings and my stomach is floating on a cloud.

I’m not sure that we can clearly identify the genius inventor of this modern food miracle but “the Google” says that Nick’s Kitchen in Huntington, Indiana was the first to sell a breaded pork tenderloin to customers nearly 125 years ago. Nick’s Kitchen is still in business today, proving the demand of a quality product for the ages.

Through the years, I have been fortunate to enjoy pork tenderloins at many cafes and diners in Illinois. I know that I’ve hit gold when the question from the waitress is “how many buns do you want with it?”

Memorable restaurants serving great pork tenderloins during my travels include:

- Spoonies – London Mills**
- Picco’s – Norris**
- Copper Kettle Cafe – Ellisville**
- Schooners – Bloomington**

I recently read that the Illinois Pork Producers created the Illinois Pork Tenderloin Trail. I can’t believe I didn’t think of it. During October’s National Pork Month, people who visited 9 participating restaurants in Illinois



and enjoyed a pork tenderloin sandwich had an opportunity to have their pork tenderloin passbook stamped. Those completing the trail received an exclusive

T-shirt “I conquered the Illinois Pork Tenderloin Trail”.

I have a new addition to my bucket list.

Little did Nick’s Kitchen know at the time, a Midwestern phenomenon was created.

If Santa doesn’t follow through, perhaps I will “gift” breaded pork tenderloins to my wife’s mom and siblings. I can picture them celebrating now.

This holiday season, I am thankful for... “Restaurants serving a breaded pork tenderloin sandwich bigger than my head!”

Enough of my nonsense. I wish all members a great December.

Happy Holidays and see you in 2026!

Dear Santa,

If it’s not too much to ask, will you please include a breaded pork tenderloin sandwich for each CCFB member’s stocking this year. They have been so very, very good this year.

With great respect,

Bob (Yes, your Farm Bureau friend)

PS. You may need to provide everyone a bigger stocking.



Recipe of the Month

Linda Tobias, CCFB Staffer

PISTACHIO PUDDING Bundt Cake



INGREDIENTS

- 1 box white cake mix that does NOT contain pudding (like Duncan Hines)
- 2 small boxes (3.4 oz) of instant pistachio pudding
- 1/2 c water
- 1/2 c oil
- 1/2 c milk
- 5 eggs

DIRECTIONS

Mix all ingredients in a large mixing bowl and beat on medium speed for approximately two minutes. Once completely mixed, pour into a greased bundt pan. Bake at 350 ° for 50-55 minutes (test doneness using toothpick, should come out clean). Top with powdered sugar if you like.



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.

Call the office on any Wednesday in December with the word of the day: **JINGLEBELLS**



Charitable Giving

through Individual Retirement Accounts

If you are over 70 ½, the Federal government may permit you to roll over up to \$100,000 from your IRA to charity without increasing your taxable income or paying any additional tax. These tax-free rollover gifts could be \$1,000, \$10,000 or any amount up to \$100,000 this year. If you are 72 or over, the gift may satisfy your required minimum distribution for this year. Simply contact your custodian and request that an amount up to \$100,000 be transferred to the charity of your choice.



The Cook County Farm Bureau® Foundation

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www.cookcfb.org

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This information is not intended as tax, legal or financial advice. Gift results may vary. Consult your personal financial advisor for information specific to your situation.



Young Leader Spotlight: JONNY POOLE

I am a professional in the food industry with a focus on ingredient technology and functionality. I graduated with a Bachelor's in Food Science from the University of Illinois. My passions include conducting global nutrition research and exploring trends related to "better-for-you" food products.

My involvement in the Farm Bureau began with a friendly connection between the CCFB and the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. I became aware of the organization along with the opportunities with them. After receiving a scholarship from CCFB, I opened up a door to professional contacts and friends that are committed to supporting each other on their agricultural journeys.

My favorite farm or food memories include visiting the Historic Wagner Farm and learning about farm operations, team meetings/dinners with the Young Leaders Committee and sponsors, and the professional workshops the CCFB holds such as the public speaking workshop.

If someone is considering joining the Young Leader Committee, I would strongly advise it. There are many brilliant minds that come from unique areas and focuses of the agricultural industry. No matter what background you possess, there is a seat at the table for anyone. We help develop each other professionally in our careers and personal growth through an empowering and supportive community where everyone can be themselves. The Young Leader Committee has many planned events and flexible activities scheduled throughout the year, along with a support system with a door open at all times.

Cook CFB Young Leader Recognized for Outstanding Agricultural Leadership

Ten Illinois 4-H members who exemplified outstanding leadership in the agricultural industry and demonstrated a desire to remain engaged were recently recognized as 2025-26 Illinois Sustaining the Future Award recipients.

As Sustaining the Future Award recipients, these dedicated and hard-working 4-H members are invited to attend the Premier 20 Leadership Conference, an elite youth leadership and professional development opportunity in April.

Of the recipients, Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader Addison McLaughlin, a freshman at Joliet Junior College studying pre-vet, and Boone County 4H member was selected. McLaughlin recently received first place in the 2025 Illinois PAS Career Planning event in Environmental Service Systems.

The Sustaining the Future Award is sponsored by Illinois Farm Bureau and the Affiliates Youth Education in Agriculture Committee.



ADDISON MCGLAUGHLIN

Cook CFB Young Leader Competes at Collegiate Discussion Meet



ELIJAH FLOERKE

The Collegiate Discussion Meet challenges participants to engage in a collaborative exchange of ideas, similar to a committee meeting, as they discuss pre-determined topics relevant to agriculture. Competitors are evaluated on their knowledge of the subject,

Elijah Floerke competed in the Illinois Farm Bureau® Collegiate Discussion Meet in October. The event brought together 24 students from 10 chapters across the state to showcase their agricultural knowledge, communication skills, and ability to find solutions to complex industry issues.

ability to build on others' ideas, and skill in moving the conversation toward realistic solutions.

Gracie Murphy was named the state winner, and Haley Bode was named the state runner-up, both representing Southern Illinois University. Benjamin Bremmer, representing the University of Illinois, and Rylee Skillman, representing Joliet Junior College, rounded out the final four as honorable mentions.

Floerke is a member of the Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leaders and is attending Illinois State University.

The Farm Bureau Collegiate Discussion Meet is one of several statewide programs that give students the opportunity to develop leadership skills and advocate for agriculture.

Scholarships

Continued from Page 1

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

Other Scholarship opportunities available...

"Moving Ag Forward" Vocational Ag Career Training (available in three cycles in 2025/2026) – 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)



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. (Available throughout the year)

Visit www.cookcfb.org/foundation or scan the QR code for more information on these scholarships and to apply.

END OF YEAR Foundation Contributions

Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation® is very fortunate that we have members seeking to contribute charitable donations to our agricultural literacy cause as we close out the year. Members seeking to contribute to the Foundation can do so using the form.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DONATION!

Donor Name/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

Credit Card: Visa Master Card Discover

Card #: _____ Exp: _____ Signature: _____

Donations to the CCFB Foundation can be made by:

Mailing a check to
6438 Joliet Rd., Ste 101
Countryside, IL 60525

Visiting our website at
www.cookcfb.org/foundation

Calling the office at
708-354-3276

Board Selects Leadership Team for the Next Year

At the November 12, 2025 meeting of the Cook County Farm Bureau Board, following the Annual Meeting, the Directors elected its leadership team for the upcoming year. The following individuals were selected to lead the Cook County Farm Bureau in 2026.



Janet McCabe
Ms. Janet McCabe, Orland Park, was re-elected by the Board to serve as the organization's President, a position she has held since November of 2017. McCabe and her husband, Joe, farm in the southern Cook County area and northern Will County raising corn, soybeans, wheat, and marketing hay/straw. She has served on the Cook County Farm Bureau Board since 2011 and has been a part of the organization's Team structure since it was created in 2005. She has served in a variety of leadership roles including Secretary/Treasurer, Governmental Affairs Team, Political Action Committee, Public Relations Team, Audit Committee, and Building Committee. She has served as a director on the Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation® Board. She has also served in Illinois Farm Bureau statewide leadership positions. In addition to her on-farm role, Janet is a

Registered Nurse and has been practicing for over 30 years. McCabe said, "It is humbling to be re-elected to another term as President. 2026 will prove to be an important year for Cook County Farm Bureau and I look forward to helping the board determine the organization's future as we seek to serve members in the organization."



Gerry Kopping
Mr. Gerald Kopping, Lemont, was re-elected to the Executive Committee as the Vice-President of the Board for a third term. Kopping has been a member of the Cook County Farm Bureau® Board of Directors since 2004 and has served as the Chairman of the Commodities and Marketing Team, Foundation Fundraiser Chair, Executive Finance Committee, and other leadership roles. Gerry, along with his family, operate Kopping Farms where they board 110 horses, farm 600-acres, custom farm 100-acres, and raise 35-head of cattle. In addition to Farm Bureau, Gerry is an active member of St. James at Sag Bridge Catholic Church in Lemont, the oldest Catholic church in Cook County; a member of the Lemont Chamber of Commerce; a board member for the Francis Field Youth Foundation; a member of the Land of Lincoln,

Illinois, and American Quarter Horse Associations; and a member of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois. Gerry and his wife, Linda, have three adult children.



Ruth Zeldenrust
Ms. Ruth Zeldenrust, South Cook, was elected Secretary-Treasurer by the Board. She is also Chair of the Audit Committee. She has been a member of the CCFB Board of Directors since 2011 and has been a part of the organization's team structure since it was created in 2005. She currently serves as Chair of the Governmental Affairs Team and is on the Foundation Board of Directors. She owns and operates Zeldenrust Farm Market and Greenhouses, raising local fresh vegetables and flowers/bedding plants in south Cook County.



Mike Rauch
Joining these three officers on the Executive Finance Committee for the next year will be board members Mike Rauch and Dan Biernacki, both of Tinley Park. The Executive Finance

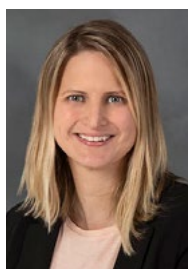


Dan Biernacki
Committee holds the responsibility of the budgeting, finance, personnel, and day-to-day oversight of the organization. They also joined the three officers as part of the Foundation Board of Directors.

From the Board of Directors, the following leaders will head up programming committees of the organization: Mike Rauch, Public Relations Team; Gerry Kopping, Commodities/Marketing Team; Greg Stack, Ag Literacy Team; Pat Horcher, Governmental Affairs Team and Blake Lanphier, Young Leaders Team. The board will be merging the Member Relations Team focus to be a part of all the other Team's responsibilities.

Under these individuals' leadership, the Cook County Farm Bureau will be focused on achieving the goals and objectives approved by the Board of Directors in 2026.

Follow These Easy Steps for Financial Wellness in 2026



Jennifer Killian
According to a recent WalletHub survey, nearly three in four people say their financial situation impacts their mental well-being, and 69% of Americans feel insecure about their finances. It's no wonder so many of us are tired of traditional 'new year, new budget' advice. Financial wellness doesn't have to mean strict spreadsheets it's about taking small, actionable steps to feel more in control.

- ✓ **Do This:** Review your spending patterns
- ✗ **Not That:** Start with a strict budget

Take a week to observe how you spend. Look at your bank statements and credit card bills to spot patterns. Are subscriptions you no longer use still draining your account? Are grocery runs adding up to more than you realize?

When you understand where your money is really going, you can make small, realistic adjustments like shopping for generic brands or switching streaming services seasonally.

Real progress beats rigid plans every time.

- ✓ **Do This:** Automate what you can
- ✗ **Not That:** Rely on willpower to save

If you have ever meant to transfer money into savings but forgot (again), automation can save you from yourself. Schedule automatic transfers to savings on payday, set up direct deposit to savings, or set up autopay for bills to avoid late fees.

This trick works because it removes temptation and decision fatigue two major barriers to saving consistently. Even a small automatic transfer adds up over time. Think of it as paying your future self-first.

- ✓ **Do This:** Build an emergency cushion
- ✗ **Not That:** Wait until you can save "enough"

A full emergency fund (three to six months of expenses) sounds great on paper and can feel impossible when money is tight. Start smaller. Even \$20 a week builds momentum. Keep it in an easy-access account, separate from other money, so it does not get mixed with daily spending.

One smart option is the IAA Credit Union Premier Savings account. It offers a high rate to help your emergency fund grow faster, unlimited withdrawals so you can access your money whenever you need it, and no minimum balance making it easy to start small and build up over time. While there's no cap on how much you can save in this account, interest is paid on balances up to \$20,000, giving your emergency cushion room to grow while maximizing your earnings.

This cushion helps protect you from unexpected costs a car repair, a surprise bill, or even a missed paycheck—and gives you confidence that you can handle what comes your way. By using a Premier Savings account, you can set yourself up for success while enjoying flexibility and peace of mind.

- ✓ **Do This:** Plan for joy – not just bills
- ✗ **Not That:** Treat fun as "extra" or "unnecessary"

Your budget should not just be about survival. Planning ahead for things that bring you joy, like a family outing, a weekend getaway, or even a nice meal out, keeps your financial plan sustainable. When you budget for joy and happiness, you are less likely to fall into guilt spending or burnout later.

To make planning for these joyful moments even easier, consider using special savings accounts like the IAA Credit Union Christmas Club or Vacation Club. With these accounts, you can set aside money throughout the year, and the funds remain untouched until the designated disbursement period helping you avoid tapping into your savings early. The Christmas Club is perfect for holiday expenses, while the Vacation Club is ideal for trips or getaways. Both options allow you to plan ahead with confidence, making it simple to enjoy special occasions without financial stress.

- ✓ **Do This:** Check your credit and debt picture
- ✗ **Not That:** Avoid it because it feels stressful

It is tempting to look away from debt; however, facing it head-on is the first step to taking control. Start by pulling your free credit report at AnnualCreditReport.com and reviewing all your balances, interest rates, and due dates.

To take your financial awareness a step further, consider using the IAA Credit Union My Credit Score tool, which allows you to monitor your credit score, try out the credit score simulator to see how different actions might

impact your score, and set up personalized savings goals. These features empower you to see the potential impact of paying down debt, managing accounts responsibly, and building your savings. Focus on paying off the smallest balance first (the "snowball" method) to build momentum or tackle the highest-interest debt first (the "avalanche" method) to save money over time. With My Credit Score, you can visualize your progress, make informed decisions, and achieve your financial goals with greater confidence.

- ✓ **Do This:** Seek trusted support
- ✗ **Not That:** Navigate your finances alone

You don't need to have all the answers to feel confident about your finances. IAA Credit Union provides various financial products to help members manage their money with less stress, including automated savings accounts and flexible loan options. Plus, IAA Credit Union works with GreenPath Financial Wellness to offer expert advice on budgeting, debt management, and financial planning. This partnership equips you with the resources and guidance to boost your confidence and achieve lasting financial health, one step at a time.

Planting Seeds “Celebrating the Holidays with Ag Education”



**Katrina
J.E. Milton**

In November, I led a virtual workshop for teachers to earn continuing education hours about agriculture's connections to winter holidays. My portion of the workshop was one hour long, and at first, I worried about being able to find a topic or two to talk about for an hour.

I shouldn't have worried! I easily found topics, probably enough for 10 hours and 10 workshops! After much deliberation, I chose to discuss the topics of Christmas trees, holiday spices, poinsettias, and beeswax. I loved being able to research and learn new things and then teach educators what I learned. The educators will then teach their students, and I was able to multiply my impact and broaden the scope of ag education.

For instance, did you know that more poinsettias are sold during the winter holidays than any other potted plant the rest of the year? Or that saffron is the world's most expensive spice? It can take 10,000 flowers or more to yield one pound, because the spice is the dried yellow stigma of crocus flowers. I also learned that Christmas trees are grown on farms in all 50 states and that 98% of Christmas trees are grown on farms and only 2% are cut from the wild.

I realized how little I knew about topics I thought I knew a lot about. It also made me realize that I have to do more reading!

At the beginning of the year, my goal was to read more books. Throughout the year, I have read dozens of books, visited my library more often, and began listening to audiobooks for the first time. This holiday season, I plan on curling up under a blanket and reading during the chilly evenings.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, in Iceland, there is the tradition of “Jólabókaflóð,” or the “Christmas Book Flood,” where books are exchanged as gifts and people spend the night reading them, often with hot chocolate. Some of my family and friends aren't readers, but I plan on giving some readable materials as gifts, such as magazines and calendars.

Illinois Ag in the Classroom's Ag Mags make great stocking stuffers for all ages. The agricultural magazines come in a variety of topics and can be read online or printed as a PDF from www.agintheclassroom.com.

If you are interested in family-centered ag education, Cook County Farm Bureau has a new gift idea.

Our Ag Book in a Box: An AITC Immersive Experience for Families includes “Sleep Tight Farm” by Eugenie Doyle, themed items, hands-on activities, crafts, and snacks. The box costs \$25 if shipped, \$20 if picked up from the farm bureau in Countryside. Boxes can be requested online at <https://forms.gle/jGHeE2MUZEomxh1d6> or by calling our office at 708-354-3276.

For adults interested in reading, CCFB's Zoom Book Club will be reading “Grocery: The Buying and Selling of Food in America.” The book club will meet at 6 p.m. virtually via Zoom Jan. 13 and 27 and Feb. 10 and 24. Register by January 2 by emailing bona@cookcfb.org. There is no charge to join the book club for CCFB members, \$10 for non-members.

I hope you enjoy reading and learning this holiday season. Don't forget the hot cocoa!

Katrina Milton, Director of Ag Literacy Katrina can be reached at aipc@cookcfb.org.



educators
Give Yourself the Gift
of Agriculture

SCHEDULE YOUR FREE IN-SCHOOL FIELD TRIP TODAY
<https://bit.ly/AITCplease>

Children's Books

Continued from Page 1

Apple Pie Picnic (978-1636550619) by *Alicia Duran (PreK-3rd)*. From flower to fruit to dessert, apples become apple pie in this beautifully illustrated book.

Something, Someday (978-0593203255) by *Amanda Gorman (K-4th)*. A community garden takes center stage in this beautifully illustrated book that accompanies a fantastic poem.

Still There Was Bread (978-0063216556) by *Lisl Dettlesen (K-4th)*. Making rolls takes on a new meaning with Grandma. A reminder that family time preparing a meal is sometimes more than just a meal. This book was also featured at the IAA Foundation booth at Annual Meeting.

Outdoor Farm, Indoor Farm (978-1635925913) by *Lindsay Metcalf (K-4th)*. A fresh look at unique aspects of agriculture, technology and innovation in an elementary book.

Love Grows (978-0063237742) by *Illinois author Ruth Spiro (PreK-3rd)*. Accurate descriptions of houseplants take center stage in this read that should not be overlooked by those with aspiring green thumbs. This book was featured at the IAA Foundation booth.

Farmer Eva's Green Garden Life (978-0998047775) by *Jacqueline Briggs Martin (K-4th)*. Caldecott Award winning author highlights farming, community and the soil that links us all as she highlights Farmer Eva.

Here in the Real World (978-0062698957) by *Sara Pennypacker (4th-8th)*. Two misfit youth find their normal with a garden in an unexpected locale.

Each Day is a Gift (978-1506492520) by *Lisl Dettlesen (all ages)*. While not specific to agriculture, an outstanding book that focuses on gratitude and appreciating what matters.

The Labors of Hercules Beal (978-0358659631) by *Gary D. Schmidt (4th-8th)*. An Illinois author highlights a seventh grader in a new school, facing his own set of challenges — much like that of his namesake.

Looking for activities to accompany these? Check out our website, agintheclassroom.org

Kevin Daugherty serves as the education director for Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom.



Students from Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences and Rich Township High School learn how to harvest cool weather crops during Cook County Farm Bureau's Ag Leadership Academy, held Nov. 12 at Smits Farms.

18 Students Attend 2025 Ag Leadership Academy

On Nov. 12, 18 FFA students attended Cook County Farm Bureau's Ag Leadership Academy, held at Smits Farms in Chicago Heights. The 10 students from Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences and 8 students from Rich Township High School learned about Smits Farms' greenhouse operations and cool weather harvesting, how to make a salad using winter greens, herbs, and vegetables through a hands-on salad making demonstration with Illinois Agri-Food Alliance's Careers Coordinator Shanell Rainey-Jacob, and how to clean native plants and how to save their seeds with horticulturalist Dolly Foster. During this educational field trip, the students also learned more about Cook County's agriculture, agricultural career opportunities, and the many connections that agriculture has to their daily lives.

AGRICULTURE ADVENTURES FOR FAMILIES



Gingerbread Cake Recipe

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup molasses
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup hot water

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour a 9-inch square baking pan.
2. Beat butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer until creamy.
3. Add sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Mix in egg, then mix in molasses until smooth.
4. Sift flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and salt into a large bowl.
5. Gradually add dry ingredients to the molasses mixture, mixing after each addition until incorporated. Mix in water until smooth.
6. Pour cake batter into the prepared pan.
7. Bake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes. Insert a toothpick in the



center of the cake; it should come out clean and out of the oven. If not, bake for 15 to 30 more minutes, checking often for doneness.

8. Allow gingerbread cake to cool in the pan before serving.
9. Top with whipped topping and cinnamon if desired.

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/7322/favorite-old-fashioned-gingerbread/>

DID YOU KNOW?

Gingerbread was first made with honey and breadcrumbs. One of the earliest English recipes for gingerbread, written down in the fifteenth century, didn't actually contain any ginger! Spices were an expensive rarity, and the use of excessive saffron in gingerbread was a way of demonstrating wealth to guests.



December Word Search

Last Month's Winner:
Therese Doorneweerd

Bake	Y	F	W	M	U	E	B	X	S	T	K	E	W	S	Q
Breadcrumbs	Z	C	L	R	N	K	R	Y	X	E	P	A	H	U	G
Butter	S	K	D	O	E	A	Y	O	W	I	V	O	V	G	G
Candy	R	Q	T	S	U	B	C	R	C	G	N	O	B	A	I
Clove	F	Q	U	T	M	R	W	E	M	E	M	N	L	R	N
Flour	C	O	S	M	O	E	R	M	Y	O	K	P	C	C	G
Gingerbread	H	E	G	A	L	L	I	V	L	K	Z	N	I	D	E
Honey	S	B	M	U	R	C	D	A	E	R	B	Z	R	R	R
House	I	X	O	C	J	T	S	B	U	T	T	E	R	H	B
Men	D	O	S	N	A	S	Z	S	A	F	F	R	O	N	R
Molasses	X	N	U	E	E	N	Z	Y	G	M	V	R	D	M	E
Recipe	L	N	K	S	C	S	D	L	T	P	J	A	U	T	A
Saffron	Y	E	E	U	M	I	Q	Y	A	Q	Q	I	C	H	D
Spices	Q	M	I	E	H	N	P	Q	V	M	V	Q	S	C	G
Sugar	E	H	T	Q	C	I	H	S	I	U	F	O	O	Z	A
Village															

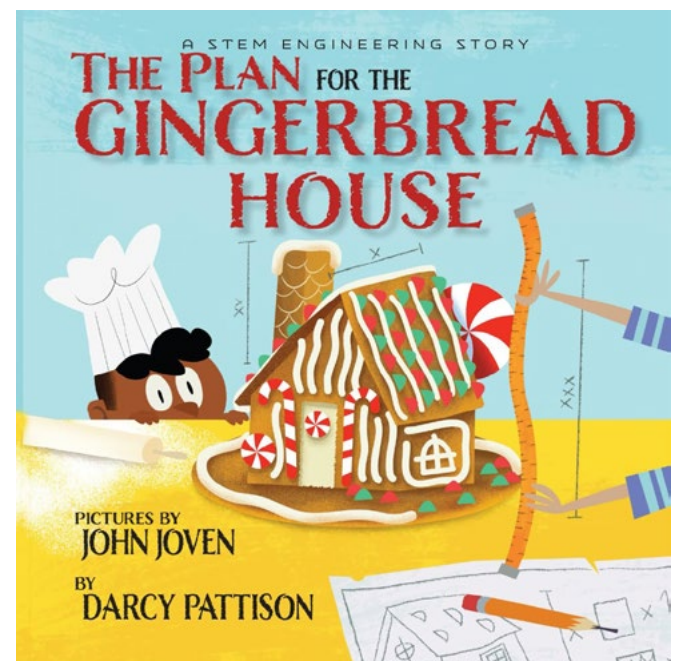
Name _____
Phone # _____
Membership # _____

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

Holiday READING CORNER



The Plan for the Gingerbread House:

A STEM Engineering Story

Written by Darcy Pattison,
Illustrated by John Joven

Book description from Amazon:

"A team of kids struggle to create the perfect gingerbread house. The project guidelines are clear: the winning house must stand upright on its own and a gingerbread boy and girl must fit inside."

Choose Your Prize: Word Search

Choices include a \$25 Beggar's Pizza Gift Card, Delta Sonic Car Wash (Two 10-min Interior Cleaning ONLY, NO WASH) 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!**



Director Ruth Zeldenrust (L), Secretary-Treasurer, presented the minutes from the previous annual meeting and provided the audited balance statement of the organization while President Janet McCabe (R) presided over the 105th Annual Meeting.

Cook County Farm Bureau Holds 105th Annual Business Meeting in November

Janet McCabe, President; Roger Freeman, Chairman of the Cook County Farm Bureau Credentials Committee and Chairman of the Nominating Committee; and Ruth Zeldenrust, Secretary-Treasurer, led the 105th Annual Meeting of the Cook County Farm Bureau held

November 12, 2025. There were 94 voting members attending in person and by proxy.

Cook County Farm Bureau President Janet McCabe chaired the meeting to address the business of the organization including receiving an audited financial report, election of directors, approval of acts and deeds of the board for the past year, and approval of delegates to the IAA annual meeting.

The directors elected to serve a two-year term on the board of directors were:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Jim Bloomstrand | Mike Rauch |
| Blake Lanphier | Mark Yunker |
| Janet McCabe | Ruth Zeldenrust |

The delegates and alternates approved to represent CCFB at the Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting December 6 -9 were:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| DELEGATES: | ALTERNATES: |
| Janet McCabe | Dan Biernacki |
| Ruth Zeldenrust | Greg Stack |
| Gerry Kopping | Blake Lanphier |



Director Roger Freeman served as the nomination committee chair and the credentials committee chair. He submitted the directors for election as well as the certified voting member attendance report.

President McCabe recognized the board, staff, and teams for a great year of programs and membership service and commended the board, staff, and members for their hard work through recent years.



Farm Provides a Gathering Ground

My Spiritual Gifts Quiz from church put hospitality at the top of my list. Mom didn't take the quiz, but I'll bet the Lievens 40 she'd score the same. So, with a strong service mindset and the shop space to match, we host. In the last 10 years, our farm has hosted two weddings, FFA and 4-H meetings, farmer events, a bridal shower, my daughter's graduation party, and last summer, the first-ever all-class reunion for our local high school.

By now, our employees know "other duties as assigned" in their job descriptions gets some mileage. And they know with Christmas coming, the shop clear-out and clean-up is imminent. In preparation for our four-generation Christmas party, we pause machinery maintenance, remove the farm equipment and scrub the concrete floor. Christmas carols replace country tunes on the shop speakers. When the big event arrives, the cousins make memories in a farm shop turned makeshift gymnasium for kicking balls, shooting hoops and riding pedal tractors. The adults play cards in the conference room, and potluck food lines tables down the office hallway for mealtime and grazing.

The farm naturally brings together family, tradition and community at the intersection of work and home, hospitality and hard work, generosity and gravel. Yes, rocks. We farm with 21st-century equipment and still live on a 20th-century road – a nuisance for guests arriving in heavy rain (mud and washouts), a dry spell (fog-level dust) or the early spring thaw when your car wrestles with the gravel road. It's all part of the experience.

Mom ensures hospitable elements carry farm flair. From wood salvaged off an old barn, a local carpenter transformed an old chest freezer into a rustic drink and ice cream station and fashioned a rolling bar to match. A "dessert wagon" sports steel wheels from an old loading chute and the door from a barn mow hides some of the welding corner. Among my favorites: Two tractors on the farm span exactly 70 years apart to make a conversation piece as much as a party backdrop.

The FFA mom in me roots for a winter "drive-in movie" with teen vehicles parked in the shop to watch a film on the drywall projector screen. But if not, we'll have a farm conference in March and a graduation party in May. Fingers crossed, the weather allows planting in April.

About the author: Joanie Stiers farms with her parents and brother in Knox County, where they grow corn, soybeans and hay, raise beef cattle and operate side businesses related to the family operation.

DECEMBER

JULYSSE
ESPARZA



COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION'S / OUTSTANDING IN THEIR FIELD

Ag Student of the Month

Grade: 12

School: Rich Township High School

Involvement in Agriculture: Julysse is a senior in the Agriculture Pathway at Rich Township High School. She enjoys operating the school's botany lab, which houses 13 hydroponic towers, where students produce fresh greens and herbs that are used in the school's Culinary Program and donated to the community.

Words from the Nominator: "Julysse is passionate about agricultural advocacy and wants to pursue a career

in agricultural education where she can work with youth and advocate for a prosperous future for agriculture, people, and the world. She enjoys showcasing the brand-new botany lab to community partners, future students, and other stakeholders in order to show them the projects the students are currently working on."

~ Jessica Biernacki, Agriculture Teacher

Plans for the Future: Her plan for the future is to attend Southern Illinois University Carbondale to pursue a degree in agricultural education.

Manifolds, Manolos, and Manure

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



Bona Heinsohn

Since taking office in 2023, the Mayor of Chicago has introduced three budget

proposals. First was the 2024 budget, also known as a grace period budget, proposed by a brand-new mayor, freshly elected, having never served in city government.

His 2025 budget proposal met with significant pushback. Aldermen were angered by a proposed \$300 million property tax increase. Under the mayor's proposal, the average homeowner would've seen a 4.8 percent property tax increase. In a rare win for a historically weak council, aldermen voted overwhelmingly against the proposal and forced the mayor to find other funding streams. Aldermen introduced and approved the responsible budgeting ordinance, which contained some budget improvements, including an earlier budget deadline to increase

transparency, more power to the Council Office of Financial Analysis, and enhancing the information available to the public. Aldermen Gilbert "Gil" Villegas also reached out to the Illinois Legislature about changing Chicago's charter to grant more power to the city council. Something that would've been unheard of under previous mayors.

Earlier this year, the mayor released his 2026 budget proposal. Calling it "Protecting Chicago", the mayor called for a corporate \$21-per-employee "head tax" on the largest corporations, a 14 percent cloud computing tax, and 50-cent per month per user fee on social media platforms. The proposal also underfunds the advance pension payment. However, the mayor promised to make full payments in the future. Wink. Wink. Although the budget proposal does not include a property tax increase, business groups argue that the new taxes would stifle economic growth and harm Chicago's and Illinois' economy.

At an appearance before members of the Economic Club of Chicago, Governor

J.B. Pritzker expressed his concern about the impact of the new taxes. "I am absolutely four-square opposed to a head tax for the City of Chicago," Pritzker declared. "It penalizes the very thing that we want, which is we want more employment in the City of Chicago, and it makes it very hard to attract companies from outside of Chicago and harder for companies that are in Chicago to stay."

Pritzker isn't the only one expressing concerns. A group of 28 aldermen (out of 50) signed a letter in late October detailing their opposition to the corporate head tax. They contend that the tax would hurt job growth and cause companies, including homegrown ones, to leave Chicago. Their letter also called for more spending cuts, specifically those recommendations brought forth in a report by the consulting firm Ernst & Young.

Business groups including the Illinois Chamber, Illinois Manufacturers' Association, Illinois Retail Merchants Association, BOMA Chicago, Taxpayers'

Federation of Illinois, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, SBAC, Civic Federation, and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce penned a joint statement applauding the aldermen who penned the letter stating that "Their leadership reflects a growing recognition that Chicago's future depends on smart, sustainable choices that strengthen our competitiveness and signal clearly: Chicago is open for business."

Returning to the spending cuts identified by Ernst & Young. In November, skeptical aldermen grilled the mayor's budget team and an Ernst & Young consultant on how the firm's recommendations were incorporated into the mayor's proposal. Disappointed alderman argued that not enough of the efficiency measures identified in the report were included and that easy fixes like reducing an excessive ratio of supervisors to staff and mismanagement of city vehicle fleets were excluded. In response, the budget director indicated that not all the recommendations or

options are feasible because Chicago is unique, and that even though the options have worked in other cities, they may not work in Chicago. The Ernst & Young study cost taxpayers \$3 million.

Perhaps the icing on the mayor's 2026 budget proposal is the ratings giant S&P Global Ratings warning that if the mayor's budget is approved, then Chicago should prepare for a credit rating downgrade. A credit downgrade would make it more expensive for the city to borrow money and cost taxpayers more money in the long run.

Although Chicago taxpayers will bear the brunt of the mayor's budget proposal, all Illinois taxpayers will be impacted. Chicago and the collar counties contribute a significant portion of Illinois' economy, and in 2016, the metro area generated approximately 77.3 percent of the state's total wages. The region is a major North American transportation hub and is home to 35 Fortune 500 companies. This conversation extends well beyond the city limits.



Kellanova Staff Join Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader for a Farm Visit

Staff from Kellanova in Chicago and Michigan joined Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leader Doug Yunker for a farm visit in Orland Park. Kellanova is a leading company in global snacking, international cereals and noodles, plant-based foods, and North American frozen breakfast. Other Farm Bureau leaders including Mark Yunker, Ruth Zeldenrust, Mike Rauch, and Janet McCabe joined the visit and discussed their farms with participants.



Participants Discuss Grain Transportation and Sales

Cook County Farm Bureau board member Mark Yunker (pictured in gray) discusses grain elevator tickets with staff from Kellanova. Grain elevator tickets provide a farmer with a record of the grain delivered to an elevator and includes the weight, moisture content, test weight, and other factors like damage and foreign matter. Kellanova staff had the opportunity to discuss farming and ride in a combine during the visit.

Farm Bureau Remains Opposed to Energy and Battery Storage Siting Bill

Throughout the summer, Farm Bureau has been diligently working on a few critical issues left lingering from the spring session, including the energy and battery storage bill that reemerged a few days prior to the final week of the fall Veto Session. Farm Bureau repeatedly shared members' concerns during legislative hearings throughout the summer and fall. Farm Bureau also issued a "call to action" asking members to contact their state representatives and senators. Thank you to everyone who responded! Even though Farm Bureau was unsuccessful in its opposition, legislators heard members' voices!

Senate Bill 25 was amended to create an omnibus energy reform, including incentives and regulations around the siting of battery storage facilities. The legislation eliminates the moratorium on expanded nuclear energy production. Farm Bureau policy supports eliminating the moratorium on new nuclear energy production.

However, the legislation fails to include any requirement for an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (AIMA) for battery storage development, like those required for wind and solar projects. Farm Bureau policy supports an AIMA for all renewable energy projects, including battery installations. An AIMA for battery installations would help ensure that impacted farmland is cared for and restored during and after construction or deconstruction.

The bill provides that only counties that have adopted zoning standards can regulate battery siting. This would mean that landowners in counties without zoning authority, which is approximately a third of the state, will have zero protections. A county without zoning authority will not be able to regulate the siting of battery storage facilities, and therefore be powerless to protect landowner interests.

The legislation also fails to include fire suppression requirements for battery installations. Farm Bureau policy supports requiring fire suppression for battery installations to reduce risk of fires. If a fire were to occur near farmland during certain times of the year (i.e. fall when crops are dry), fires could destroy nearby crops and spread to neighboring properties. The bill provides that a county may require fire suppression requirements. However, again, if a county does not have zoning authority, it would not be able to impose such a requirement.

The bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 70 to 37 and the Senate 37 to 22. Farm Bureau remains opposed to the bill.

SCAN HERE

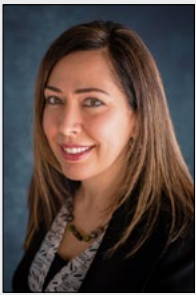
Scan below to renew your CCFB membership
Just as easy as using the "EASY" button!

CCFB is
AWESOME!

www.cookcfb.org

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 December 2025 by Sharon Stemke, District Leader. Karen's office is located at 4845 167th St, Oak Forest, IL. Her phone number is 708-596-0008. Karen has been an Agent with COUNTRY® Financial since May 2020. **Orland Park Agency, Sharon Stemke, District Leader**



JUSTIN TRUONG

has been named Agent of the Month for December 2025 by Vicki Nygren, District Leader. Justin's office is located at 4306 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL. His phone number is 773-498-1016. Justin has been an Agent with COUNTRY® Financial since October 2023. **Chicago North Agency, Vicki Nygren, District Leader**



MATT FOWLER

has been named Agent of the Month for December 2025 by Matt Huonder, District Leader. Matt's office is located at 708 Church St, Evanston, IL. His phone number is 847-231-1190. Matt has been an Agent with COUNTRY® Financial since November 2024. **Chicago Northwest Agency, Matt Huonder, District Leader**



JOANNA KAPICA

has been named Agent of the Month for December 2025 by Alonzo Navarez, District Leader. Joanna's office is located at 7824 W. Belmont Ave, Chicago, IL. Her phone number is 708-314-2009. Joanna has been a Financial Representative with COUNTRY® Financial since August 2021. **Chicago South Agency, Alonzo Navarez, 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.*

Happy Holidays!

From our family to yours. The Cook County Farm Bureau would like to wish you a warm and safe holiday!



Left to right:

Todd Price, Mike Rauch, President Janet McCabe, Mark Yunker, Greg Stack, Roger Freeman, Blake Lanphier, Jim Bloomstrand, Pat Horcher, Dan Biernacki, Vice-President Gerry Kopping (seated), and Secretary/Treasurer Ruth Zeldenrust (seated).



"Moving Ag Forward" VOCATIONAL AG CAREER TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE

The Agriculture and farming industry needs skilled workers and the Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation wants to support the those looking to advance their careers in the ag & farming industry!

The CCFB Foundation is offering vocational ag career training scholarships up to \$1,250 to students who are enrolled in a vocational training program or at an Illinois Community College for Truck Driver Training, diesel mechanics, welding, or technology with a focus on an agriculturally connected career.



APPLICATION WINDOW IS NOW OPEN!

DEADLINE FOR CONSIDERATION IS FEBRUARY 27, 2026 FOR PROGRAM ENROLLMENT MAY – AUGUST 2026

To Apply:

Go to www.cookcfb.org/foundation-

- Must be an Illinois resident.
- Farm Bureau membership not required.
- Must be enrolled in or planning to enroll in a vocational training program or a commercial driving training program at an Illinois Community College during the corresponding timeframe.
- Proof of enrollment must be provided when a recipient enrolls to receive the award.
- An endorsement signed by a Cook County farmer, Cook County Farm Bureau leader, area agribusiness, or area food processing business.
- Cook County Farm Bureau Foundation directors and employees of Cook County Farm Bureau or their immediate family members are not eligible to apply.



Vocational Ag Careers can include:

Truck drivers hauling agricultural commodities, food products, inputs and equipment preparing to study and test for their CDL.



Aspiring diesel mechanics looking to advance their studies or achieve a certification.



Welders looking to advance their careers.



www.cookcfb.org/foundation- | 6438 Joliet Rd, Countryside, IL 60525 | 708-354-3276

Let your Farm Bureau membership benefits help with holiday gift giving ideas and savings!

MOVIE TICKETS



AMC Tickets \$9.50



Marcus Theatres Platinum: \$8.00 Silver: \$7.00*



BLACKHAWKS TICKETS

Members have access to special priced tickets for December & January games. Game dates will be updated on our website as they are released to us. Visit our website for Ticketmaster link and discount code to purchase tickets.



BULLS TICKETS

Are you ready to SEE RED at the United Center? You can purchase tickets to Chicago Bulls games for special pricing exclusive to members! Visit our website for ticket link and discount code.



ABENITY APP

ILFB Membership Benefit Platform

Download the 'Illinois Farm Bureau Membership Benefit Platform' App on Android or iPhone for even more savings. Login or register with your Farm Bureau number.



TICKETS AT WORK

Get exclusive savings on local tours/deals, theme parks, Broadway and Vegas shows, Walt Disney World Resort, Universal Studios, Cirque du Soleil, Disney on Ice and MORE!

To sign up, visit: www.ticketsatwork.com, click on "Become a Member" and use code **CCFB**.

www.cookcfb.org

Order Movie tickets via credit card by calling 708.354.3276. Visit our website for entertainment links, pricing, and app instructions

CLASSIFIED ADS

All ads that we receive for the Co-Operator are also listed on our website at 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. 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

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

For Sale: 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.

For Sale: Craftsman 24" snow thrower. Electric start, 6 speeds forward, 2 speeds backward. Like new. Asking \$550 call Michael **847-404-4204.**

For Sale: Wen standby generator. 4500 watts standby, 3700 watts running. New in box never opened. Asking \$550 call Michael **847-404-4204.**

WANTED

Looking for someone to farm property – I have 19.26 acres on Old McHenry Rd in Hawthorne Woods, IL. There are no buildings on the property, but hay/alfalfa has been grown the last three years. The current farmer does not wish to harvest because some rocks have surfaced making it hard for a non-adjustable height cutter to work. **Please call Marilyn at 847-722-7173 to discuss the opportunity to farm.**

Wanted to buy your H/O and N scale electric trains and H/O scale slot cars and tracks. I buy large and small collections. Turn those unwanted items into cash. **Give Ron a call at 630-272-4433.**

Wanted to buy BB guns, toy guns, rifles and pistols. BB, pellet and Co2. Also cap guns. **Call 312-438-8628.**

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**

Wanted FOLD UP TABLES. **Call James 708-361-8230.**

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
"R"

RED PEPPER
FLAKES



Red pepper flakes are dried red peppers that are crushed (as opposed to ground) into small flakes along with the seeds.

Red pepper flakes may be good for the immune system because of the antioxidant components from the capsaicin.



Red pepper flakes are also known as crushed red pepper flakes or crushed red peppers.

Store red pepper flakes in a cool dry area in a well-sealed container away from heat, like in a pantry.



This spice is often found in many different foods, especially in Italian, Indian, Mexican, and Caribbean dishes.



IT USUALLY STAYS GOOD FOR ABOUT 12 TO 18 MONTHS.

They are part of the Solanaceae (nightshade) family, first found in Central and South America.



Source: <https://www.relish.com/food-wiki/153755/red-pepper-flakes-important-facts-health-benefits-and-recipes>

Farmers are Reminded to Complete the Farmland Affidavit

Cook County farmers are encouraged to complete the Farmland Affidavit prior to January 31. The Assessor's office will not mail out a copy or a reminder, and the filing can only occur online.

Details: To file, visit: <https://www.cookcountyassessor.com/farmlandaffidavit>

Cook County assesses a property according to its "Assessment Class" as defined under the Cook County Code of Ordinances. In order for a Cook County property to receive the special "farm" tax incentive, it must have been farmed for the two preceding years, and the owner must have filed the farmland affidavit prior to January 31.

For land that is new to the process, the farm owner must:

- Complete the Class Change/Farmland Application by January 31.

- Upload documentation to establish your farming activities for the current year and the two preceding years. Documentation may include farm-related insurance policies, leases, tax filings, rental agreements, contracts, or invoices.

Once the application is submitted, the owner should receive a confirmation email from the office that the application is under review and a decision regarding the property.

Additional 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.

Family, Farm, and Food Bytes

AFBF grows mental well-being support for farmers

(FarmWeek)

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) is expanding its landmark Farm State of Mind initiative to include a broader coalition of food and farming sector partners by joining forces with the Farm Family Wellness Alliance to launch the Farm State of Mind Alliance. Building on the work started as a pilot project in 2020 by Farm Foundation and National 4-H Council, the Farm Family Wellness Alliance expanded in 2023, offering Togetherall and Personal Assistance Services to farm families nationwide.

Coming together under Farm State of

Mind, managed by AFBF, will centralize resources and amplify unified messaging, allowing an even greater impact in rural communities. Existing Farm State of Mind resources will remain available at farmstateofmind.org, including a comprehensive, searchable national resource directory for rural mental health services, as well as Togetherall, the landmark peer-to-peer support program, which served as the cornerstone for the original Alliance managed by Farm Foundation.

Agriculture's Economic Contributions to Cook County, Cook County Farm Bureau – Data has been pulled together for the agricultural and farm economic and job contributions to the Cook County area and has been added to the Cook County Farm Bureau website www.cookcfb.org

The data was pulled from the Census

of Agriculture 2024 and the Decision Innovation Solutions Economic Contributions Study 2024.

Farm Foundation focuses on future farmers

(Phyllis Coulter, FarmWeek)

Helping young and beginning farmers get rolling in agriculture is one of the top priorities for Farm Foundation, the first U.S. agriculture and food think tank established 92 years ago in Illinois.

It launched its newest program, FarmPath, in partnership with two other foundations in October. The three-year program for beginning farmers includes training and workshops, one-on-one mentorships, start-up grants, support for accessing financing and regional connections to markets, service providers and buyers.

Cash-Rent Farm Lease Contract Tips for Landowners and Farmers

(University of Illinois Farmdoc website)

Having a well-written farm lease is vital in today's farm rental marketplace. Landowners and farmers can find farm lease templates online. Commonly used lease templates in Illinois are available at the University of Illinois Farmdoc website (<https://farmdoc.illinois.edu/agricultural-law>)

Both the landowner and farmer should want a written lease to protect their interests and should seek professional legal advice before signing the contract. Farmers and landowners can contact Kevin Brooks for further information at kwbrooks@illinois.edu. Search for other articles at <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/farm-coach>.

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

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, with Q&A.



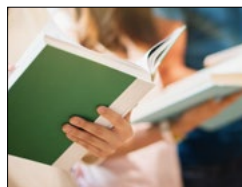
LOCATION: Zoom; link will be emailed the Friday prior

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

REGISTRATION: Registration is required by emailing ccfb@cookcfb.org or call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276.

“Grocery: The Buying and Selling of Food in America” Zoom Book Club

A fascinating look at the history, culture, and business of the modern supermarket. Through behind-the-scenes insights and personal stories, author Michael Ruhlman reveals how grocery stores shape what we eat, how we live, and even how we see ourselves as consumers.



LOCATION: Live via Zoom **DATES:** January 13 and 27, February 10 and 24 **TIME:** 6 p.m.

REGISTRATION: Register by January 2 by emailing bona@cookcfb.org

FEE: No charge for CCFB members, \$10 for non-members

Beginning Beekeeping Course at the CCFB

If you never kept bees or don't have an apiary, attend to learn how to raise bees that thrive in a chemical free environment, produce an abundance of great-tasting honey, and survive the duration of our Chicago winters. Classes are led by Kim Kulton, President of “Bee All About It”. Kim operates a commercial beekeeping business producing honey, breeding Queens, and rescuing bees. She's joined by Pete Soltesz, President of Cook DuPage Beekeepers Association.



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

DATES: Saturday & Sunday, February 21 & 22, 2026 **TIME:** 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

REGISTRATION: Registration and payment is required in advance by credit card or check by calling 708-354-3276 or CCFB members online via Member Account at: <https://www.myifb.org/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2f>

FEE: \$125.00 for members of CCFB or CDBA. \$150.00 for non-members (ask how to join)

RESCHEDULED:

Small Business Owner Webinar featuring the IAA Credit Union – New Date & Time

Every day, the IAACU strives to find the best financial solutions for each of their members. IAACU experts will discuss a range of products and services to support small and medium-sized business owners, including COUNTRY® Financial agents, landscapers, construction and excavating contractors, tradespeople (e.g., plumbers, electricians, HVAC specialists), auto service providers (body work, repair, maintenance, tires), professional offices and services (attorneys, accountants, chiropractors, MDs, dentists), owner-occupied commercial real estate, and commercial farmers.



LOCATION: Zoom; link will be emailed the day prior

DATE: Late January 2026 (date will be in January issue) **TIME:** TBD

REGISTRATION: Call the Farm Bureau at 708-354-3276, online at the Member Center at www.cookcfb.org

Farm and Food Facts Updated, Available, Cook County Farm Bureau

The latest version of Farm and Food Facts can be found on the Cook County Farm Bureau website <https://cookcfb.org/discover-local/resources/ag-resources/profile/farm-and-food-facts-2025>.

This publication is packed full of Farm and food data, facts, statistics and informational value in a readable format.



To Our Amazing Voting and Associate Members,

We would like to personally thank you on behalf of the board and staff for your 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. It has been our true pleasure serving you and your membership needs during this past year.

As your partner, your Cook County Farm Bureau offers a great membership advantage – advocacy, resources, information, and programs for necessary and essential support for you and our other members, farmers and farm owners, workers, small businesses, parents and youth, affiliated companies and those that love food. We love being your strong partner!

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

Best wishes and thank you!

Janet McCabe,
Certified Director, President

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 farming 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)
- The opportunity to be a part of a agriculturally related communities
- The Co-Operator monthly publication and quarterly IFB Partners magazine

Check out www.cookcfb.org for more!

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

We thank you for your membership and we look forward to serving you in the year to come!



Bob Rohrer,
CAE, FBCM, Manager

Cook CFB Welcomes a New Member Business And Is Pleased to Announce a New Member Benefit

Chicago 24 Hour Towing, Inc.

5332 N Elston Ave
Chicago, IL 60630
312-873-0058

Open 24 Hours A Day



Chicago 24 Hour Towing is offering CCFB members a **20% discount** on any service. They service all of Cook County and offer towing, heavy duty towing, accident recovery towing, lock out, jump start, and tire replacement services.

When you call for service, identify yourself as a Cook County Farm Bureau Member to receive the discount.

COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS



As a Farm Bureau member, you have access to great electronic publications at no extra cost!

In addition to the E-Cooperator, we also have several other newsletters. Interested in receiving these via email?

- **Urban Ag Newsletter** – Agriculture happenings in and around Cook County for urban and innovative producers.
- **The Member News** – Newsletter to CCFB leaders, affiliate companies, team members, volunteers, and staff.
- **Corner of Clark & Randolph** – Agriculture political news in Cook County.
- **Ag in the Classroom News to Use** – Information and resources for Cook County Educators.

To receive one of our digital publications, call us at (708) 354-3276 or email fbcooperator@gmail.com.

