



COOK COUNTY GO-OPERATOR

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

Mark Your Calendar

February

- 17** CCFB Foundation Scholarship Application Deadline
- 21-22** Beginning Beekeeping Course **PG 12**
- 28** Community Urban Garden Grant Application Deadline

March

- 10** Workshop on Preparing Wills/Trusts **PG 12**
- 18** Knead to Know: How Agriculture Feeds Your Sourdough **PG 12**

April

- 21** Member Wellness / Health Fair **PG 12**
- 22** Earth Day Party **PG 12**
- 27** Soap Making 101 **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

CCFB is bringing what new feature to TikTok for quick, engaging roundups of the latest agriculture news, trends, and insights?

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)

January Winner: To Be Announced

Question: Who is the Cook CFB Young Leader that competed at the State Young Leader Discussion Meet in Chicago in December?
Answer: Jennifer Miller

Word of the Month

Because we enjoy talking with our members, we are changing things up a little bit. Somewhere in each edition there will be a Word of the Month. We promise it won't be too hard to find!

Call in **any Tuesday** during the Month of February with the Word and you will be entered to win that month's prize.

We look forward to your call. Good luck!

January Winner: To Be Announced

January word was *Snow* found on Page 10.

2026 Foundation Scholarships NOW BEING ACCEPTED



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.

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

"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.



ENTER TO WIN A

VALENTINE'S

Dinner Date




CELEBRATE VALENTINE'S DAY MONTH BY ENTERING TO WIN RIBEYE STEAKS AND 2 AMC MOVIE TICKETS.

To enter, call the FB office at (708) 354-3276 or email ccfb@cookcfb.org.

Must be a Cook County Farm Bureau Member paid in good standing.

WINNER WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN THE MARCH CO-OPERATOR

Due to Post Office delivery delays, we realize the January CoOperator was weeks late in being delivered to members.

Therefore, we have extended the deadline for January contest entries. Please send in your January Ag Adventure puzzles, call in the January Question of the Month and the January Word of the Day through February. You can submit January and February together. We will draw January and February winners together and winners will be notified in the March edition.

We apologize for the inconvenience. Please know that we are continuing investigation and communications with the Post Office regarding delivery delays.



The Latest Episode of Taking Stalk with Illinois Farm Bureau Is Out!

As farmers head into the 2026 planting season, tight margins and rising input costs are forcing tough decisions in the field.

During this episode of Taking Stalk, Rita Frazer is joined by agronomists Jason Webster of Precision Planting and Todd Steinacher of Acher, who share real-world data, research insights and practical advice to help farmers “farm smarter.”

Ep. 34 – Profit per acre: Agronomy decisions that matter in 2026

Listen: [FarmWeekNow.com/podcasts](https://farmweeknow.com/podcasts)
(or wherever you listen to podcasts)

HOW FARM BUREAU SERVED YOU IN JANUARY

- ▶ Cook County Farm Bureau leaders renewed their commitment to persevering and enhancing local agriculture through the approval of the 2026 County Legislative Priorities.
- ▶ Throughout the past year, Farm Bureau has strengthened its roots in the community, partnering with local farmers, students, families, and nonprofits to grow opportunities, deepen communication, and share agriculture’s impact across the county.
- ▶ Informed the county’s ag community of the informative and timely Everything Local Specialty Growers Conference.
- ▶ Provided a fun and educational experience for families through Ag in the Classroom’s Book in a Box program.



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...

- Members Rick Johnson, Judy Fulton, and Berwyn Rascher who recently donated to the CCFB Foundation and to all of our members who have donated to the CCFB Foundation throughout 2025.
- Farm Bureau volunteer leaders Dan Biernacki, Jim Bloomstrand, Gerry Kopping, Linda Kopping, Laura McMahon, Janet McCabe, Joe McCabe, Mike Rauch, Kathy Spears, and Ruth Zeldenrust for taking time to represent CCFB at the National level.
- Cook County Farm Bureau expresses condolences to the family in the passing of John Hansen, long-time voting member and former President of the Cook-DuPage Beekeepers Association. John was an important advocate of the two organizations working together for the benefit of members.
- The members of the CCFB Young Leaders Team as members continue to seek leadership development opportunities and to become involved in all areas of the organization’s structure.
- Farm Bureau volunteers Angelica Carmen, Ellen Phillips, and Rick Johnson for taking time to review the 2026 Community Garden Grant program.
- IAA Credit Union representatives Mike Fogle, Mark Wagner, Brian Horn, and Seth Molitoris for participating in our webinar for Small Business Owners and for Jennifer Killian’s coordination.

Co-Operator

Published Monthly

Cook County Farm Bureau

6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525
(ph) 708-354-3276 (fax) 708-579-6056
(e-mail) ccfb@cookcfb.org (website) www.cookcfb.org



USPS No 132180 Periodical Postage Paid at LaGrange, IL 60525 & additional mailing office

Editor Bob Rohrer	Copy Analyst Ashley Christensen	Copy Development CCFB Office Staff
-----------------------------	---	--

Officers & Directors

Janet McCabe, President
Gerry Kopping, Vice President
Ruth Zeldenrust, Secretary-Treasurer

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

Farm Bureau Manager

Bob Rohrer

Office Staff

Jill Drover	Katrina Milton
Kelli Villarreal	Linda Tobias
Bona Heinsohn	Tim Rost
Debbie Voltz	Julie Hesperheide

Affiliated Companies

Victoria Nygren	Country Financial District Leader, Chicago North
Matt Huonder	Country Financial District Leader, Chicago Northwest
Alonzo Nevarez	Country Financial District Leader, Chicago South
Sharon Stemke	Country Financial District Leader, Orland Park
David Swigart	General Manager, Conserv FS

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

“Co-Operator” (USPS No 132180) is published monthly as a membership publication for \$3.50 per year to members as a part of their annual membership dues by Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525. Periodical postage paid at LaGrange, IL and additional mailing office. Postmaster: send address changes to the Co-Operator, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525.

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

Downwind

by **BOB ROHRER, CCFB MANAGER**



“The Food Wedge?”



I've been around long enough to see some of the USDA dietary guidelines evolve through the years. Admittedly, I missed the 1916 through 1956 recommendations, darn it. During those years, it looks like the advice was to “eat enough”.

In the 1960s and 70s: the Basic Four food groups were the big news. The food groups were not candy, candy canes, candy corn, and syrup (someone [me] watched *Elf* over Christmas).

In the 80s: A fifth food group was added to highlight moderate intake of fats,

sweets, and alcohol (moderate means different things to different folks). The food wheel was created: a daily pattern for daily food choices.

The Food Guide Pyramid and MyPyramid Food Guidance System were next up (The USDA graphic arts staff loved to depict these images).

On the Pyramid's heels, MyPlate introduced dietary guidelines (more graphic art designs).

And now, hot off the press, new dietary guidelines are in the news thanks to “Make America Healthy Again” or MAHA.

The dietary message from the MAHA Feds: “We must return to the dietary basics. American households must prioritize diets built on whole, nutritious dense foods – protein, dairy, vegetables, fruits, healthy fats, and whole grains.”

The MAHA report cover featured a fancy new inverted triangle “shapes within a shape” graphic arts image. I am going to name it, “the food martini.” Catchy?

Cracking the report, I was hoping for real back-to-the-basics dietary changes I can get behind such as...

- Recommended end-of-day three scoops of moose tracks, mint chocolate chip, or vanilla ice cream.
- Recommended daily helpings of mushrooms, cheese curds, and onion rings fried in animal fat.
- Recommended weekly minimum poundage of Bit-O-Honey, Tootsie Rolls, Skittles, Snickers, and syrup.
- Recommended additional salt prior to tasting.

Disappointment. No sign of new recommendations that are allegedly not good for you.

Instead, I saw...

- Eat the right amount for you.
- The calories needed are individual based on your age, sex, height, weight, and level of physical activity.
- Drink water. Hydration is a key factor in overall health.

Also, protein was emphasized: 1.2-1.6 grams per the kilogram weight of a person is recommended daily. Being an American, I have no idea what that means so I used my handy “metric to English” Google converter. After entering my weight and learning I'm 78 kg, I calculate I can have 125 g of protein a day. Triple digits!

Yeah. I still don't know what that means. My “metric to English” Google converter showed 125 grams is about a quarter of a pound. Wait a minute... who can survive on that? Just adding a slice of cheddar cheese to my quarter pounder burger pushes my daily protein over the limit?

If the MAHA advice is to increase protein, can I at least fry it? A junior-sized fried pork tenderloin sandwich would hit the spot!

(Incidentally, I did have feedback from several members who wanted to join me on the Illinois pork tenderloin trail which I wrote about in my December column. Proof again that Cook County Farm Bureau members are down-home, quality people with a little nutty on the side.)

Looking at the MAHA recommendations as a whole, they remind me of what my doctor recommends. Oh well, back to the Mediterranean diet.

The Make America Healthy Again report can be found at realfood.gov.

New Year – New Recipes Needed for the 2026 Recipe Collection

Do you have a favorite recipe using fresh, local ingredients that you would like to share? Please submit your recipe for our 2026 Recipe Collection! All submissions will be entered into a drawing for Farm Fund\$ for use at local member farm stands.

SEND YOUR RECIPE TODAY! Deadline for consideration is 3.25.26
 Email: membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org or ccfb@cookcfb.org
 Mail: Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Rd Ste 101, Attn: Recipes, Countryside, IL 60525



Strengthening farmers, families & futures

Join us for a 2026 Ag Summit to set yourself up for a great year of farming. We're gathering ag economic and financial service experts, wellness professionals and legal experts to get you the information you need for a successful 2026.

Seats are filling up fast. Scan the QR code below to RSVP today!

<https://cfin.us/2026AgSummit>

- 2/18 – Walker's Bluff Casino Resort – Carterville, IL
- 2/18 – Cedarhurst Center for the Arts – Mount Vernon, IL
- 2/19 – Panther Creek Country Club – Springfield, IL
- 2/19 – Pekin Country Club – Pekin, IL
- 2/20 – Urbana Country Club – Urbana, IL
- 2/23 – Eagle Ridge Resort – Galena, IL
- 2/24 – Rich Harvest Farms – Sugar Grove, IL

1225-035CP

Recipe of the Month

SERVES 4-6 Jackie Payne, Riverside

Easy LENTIL SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 med onion, chopped
- 2 t olive oil
- 2-3 t cumin, to taste
- 1 c red lentils, rinsed and sorted
- 1/4 t salt
- 1/4 - 1/2 t red pepper flakes
- Water
- Lemon

DIRECTIONS

This soup is very quick to make and very tasty. Chop onion, sauté in olive oil until soft then add cumin, to taste. Cook 30 seconds or less until you can smell the cumin. Then add red lentils, salt, red pepper flakes and water to cover, adding as necessary. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 30 minutes, until the lentils are soft.

Remove from heat and blend until smooth with an immersion blender. Serve with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

NOTE: Add other ingredients like diced potatoes or carrots, chopped Swiss chard or other greens, chopped tomatoes, etc., or a tablespoon of rice to thicken the soup. It's a great way to use up little bits of leftovers from the refrigerator.

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.

Cook County Leaders Participate in AFBF National Convention



Ruth Zeldenrust, Dan Biernacki, Mike Rauch, Laura MacMahon, Joe McCabe, Janet McCabe, Gerry Kopping, Linda Kopping, Kathy Spears, Jim Bloomstrand, Jayne Quetsch, and Bob Rohrer participated in the general sessions, seminars and workshops, and trade show, as well as interacted with other farm leaders from across the nation January 9 - 13 in Anaheim, California.

Cook County Farm Bureau® Directors joined Farm Bureau members from throughout the country at this year's American Farm Bureau Federation® Annual Meeting held in Anaheim, California in January. Board members represented the organization by attending keynote presentations, workshops, and seminars. They connected and interacted with Farm Bureau leaders across the country, as well as celebrated the heritage of Farm Bureau and grassroots engagement during the Celebration of Grassroots Reception.



American Farm Bureau President, Zippy Duvall, spoke to over 4,000 members from throughout the country about the many challenges faced by farmers and efforts being made by the national organization to bring solutions to farm families.



Brooke Rollins, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, spoke to AFBF members about the Administration's priorities for 2026 to ease the farm income crisis, markets, and input costs.



During the closing general session, attendees were inspired by a keynote address from Heisman Trophy winner, former NFL player, and five-time New York Times best-selling author Tim Tebow.

American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture Announces Book of the Year for 2026

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture presented its 19th Book of the Year award to author Shannon Anderson for "I LOVE Blueberries!" The award was presented at the American Farm Bureau Federation's 107th Convention.

Told through Jolie's comical scrapbook-style journal entries and Margot's creative sketchbook, "I LOVE Blueberries!" teaches young readers how they can create a plan and work together to not only grow blueberries but also develop a new friendship.

Anderson is a TEDx speaker, certified brain coach, and award-winning children's book author who has spent over 26 years inspiring young minds as an elementary school teacher and professor. She wrote this year's Book of the Year, "I LOVE Blueberries!", and its predecessor, "I LOVE Strawberries!"

"It is a huge honor for 'I LOVE Blueberries!' to be recognized by the Foundation. I am grateful for the support of the agricultural community and am proud to write stories that teach kids where their food comes from. This book was a team effort, and I share this award with Jaclyn Sinquett for her amazing illustrations, and with the wonderful team at Feeding Minds Press, who helped this book grow. Thank you so much!" Anderson said. The Book of the Year award



Photo Credit: AFBF



Manager Bob Rohrer met Shannon Anderson, author of the AFBF Foundation for Agriculture's book of the year, "I LOVE Blueberries!" He discussed the possibility of inviting Anderson to Cook County Farm Bureau to meet with members in 2026.

springs from the Foundation's effort to identify "Accurate Ag Books," a collection of nearly 500 books for children, teenagers, and adults that accurately cover agricultural topics. Book of the Year selections are educational, help to create positive public perceptions about agriculture, inspire readers to learn more and touch their readers' lives, as well as tell the farmer's story. The Accurate Ag Books

database is available at <http://www.agfoundation.org/recommended-pubs>.

To accompany "I LOVE Blueberries!", the Foundation has created an educator's guide and an Ag Mag Mini on blueberries. For more information, contact the Cook County Farm Bureau Agriculture Literacy Department at aitc@cookcfb.org.



Photo Credit: American Farm Bureau photo, BigFoot Media

Farm Bureau Names 2026 Farm Dog of the Year

Recognizing the vital role that four-legged friends often play on family farms and ranches, Farm Bureau launched the Farm Dog of the Year contest several years ago – now a popular feature of the American Farm Bureau Convention.

The winner of the 2026 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year award is Max, a 4-year-old Border Collie owned by Oklahoma Farm Bureau members John, Charla, and Brynley Enns. AFBF, with support from Nestlé Purina PetCare, recognized Max as the winner, from among nearly 100 contenders. Max was selected by a team of judges.

Max's primary role is to herd beef cattle on the Enns' farm. His assistance is invaluable for John, who is disabled and uses a mobility scooter. Moving "momma cows" and their growing calves from pasture to pasture so they have access to nutritious, fresh grass is a recurring chore for John and Max.

"I can't image doing this without Max," John said. "Max is not only a working dog, he's great with the family." After a long day of herding boisterous cattle on mostly hilly terrain, Max often accompanies John and Charla to pick up daughter Brynley from school. Balancing farming with a disability and family life while navigating today's challenging farm economy would test anyone. But John remains undeterred.

"Together, we make things work," he said.

30 Days to a Better Budget

Originally Posted by GreenPath Financial
Wellness Adapted by IAA Credit Union



Jennifer Killian

A new year means a new beginning and now's the perfect time to put fresh eyes on your finances. Have you ever checked your account balance and thought, *Where did all my money go?* You're not alone. A well-structured budget doesn't have to be about cutting back – it's about gaining control, reducing stress, and working toward what matters, whether that's paying down debt, saving for retirement, or finally taking a vacation. IAA Credit Union offers a range of products and services to help you get started, including checking and savings accounts, debt consolidation loans, and retirement planning tools, so you can take the next step with confidence.

Numbers That Tell a Story

- 41% of U.S. adults have credit card debt. If you're looking to reduce your debt, IAA Credit Union's low-interest credit card options and personal loans can help you manage repayments and lower your monthly burden.
- Inflation continues to challenge household budgets. IAA Credit Union's budgeting tools and financial counseling services are designed to help you stretch your dollars further and make informed decisions about your spending.
- Even though 74% of Americans use budgets, many struggle to stick to them. With IAA Credit

Union's mobile banking app and automated savings features, staying on track with your budget has never been easier.

The 30-Day Budgeting Challenge

Even when money is tight, small steps can help you regain a sense of control. This challenge is about working with what you have and making a plan that fits your reality. IAA Credit Union's financial education resources and personalized support can guide you through each step, helping you build habits for lasting financial wellness.

Week 1: Take Stock (Without Judgement)

- **Days 1-2:** Gather documents – Collect checking and savings account statements, bills, and income records. If you don't have access to everything, just start with what you know (like recent pay stubs or receipts).
- **Days 3-5:** Sort spending into essentials vs. non-essentials – Focus on basics first: housing, food, transportation, and bills. Then, list everything else.
- **Days 6-7:** Track daily spending – If writing down every dollar feels overwhelming, start small like noticing where cash disappears fastest (fast food? Gas? Impulse buys?).

Week 2: Think Small

- **Days 8-10:** Find areas to free up cash – Look for small, manageable changes. For example, try making

coffee at home instead of buying out one more time per week.

- **Days 11-13:** Commit to one realistic goal – Maybe it's just covering rent this month or paying one bill in full. Small wins build momentum.
- **Day 14:** Choose a budgeting style that fits your situation – Decide what budgeting system supports where you're at. Zero-based budgeting or the 50/30/20 rule are some examples.

Week 3: Adjust and Automate

- **Days 15-17:** Adjust spending based on what's possible – Don't aim for perfection. Aim to find small ways to stay on top of expenses.
- **Days 18-20:** Automate what you can – Even if it's just setting reminders to pay bills on time, little systems can help.
- **Day 21:** Revisit and adjust – If your first plan didn't work, that's normal. Tweak it and keep moving forward.

Week 4: Subtract, Add, and Celebrate

- **Days 22-24:** Downgrade without losing what matters – Instead of cutting everything, swap or downgrade packages (e.g., cheaper phone plans).
- **Days 25-27:** Explore ways to boost income – Selling things you don't need, freelancing, or even finding a part-time job can provide short-term relief.

- **Days 28-29:** Plan for expenses you know are coming – Even setting aside \$5-\$10 per paycheck for emergencies makes a difference. Set up automatic transfers into your savings account to build your emergency fund with ease.
- **Day 30:** Reflect on progress (no matter how small) – If you made any improvement this month, celebrate it! Every step forward counts.

Remember, you don't have to tackle budgeting alone. IAA Credit Union is here to help every step of the way. With our partnership with GreenPath Financial Wellness, our members have access to free financial counseling and personalized debt management options. Their NFCC-certified counselors are ready to meet you wherever you are, with compassion and understanding. Plus, IAACU's mobile app makes tracking your spending and managing your credit score simple and convenient so you can stay on top of your financial goals anytime, anywhere.



Not a member yet? Join IAA Credit Union today and let us help you stay on budget and build a brighter financial future!

Scan the QR code or visit us at www.iaacu.org today!



Feast Mode: What Will the 2026 Super Bowl Bring to Chicken Wing Demand?

In 2025, The National Chicken Council (NCC) released its annual Chicken Wing Report, projecting that Americans would consume 1.47 billion chicken wings watching the Kansas City Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles battle for the Lombardi Trophy. This figure represented an increase of 1.5% chicken wings (or 20 million more wings) from the previous Super Bowl of San Francisco 49ers vs Kansas City Chiefs.

So how do 1.47 billion chicken wings stack up? Picture this:

- If every single player in the NFL ate 50 wings a day (and was immortal) it would take them collectively 720 years to eat 1.47 billion.
- 1.47 billion wings laid end to end would stretch to and from GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri to Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania about 63 times.
- Enough to give more than four wings each to every person in the United States.
- Laid end-to-end, 1.47 billion wings would circle the Earth more than 3 times.



Retail wing sales grow in the NFL Super Bowl representative markets. Last year, Kansas City area wing sales during the football playoffs saw a +21.9 percent sales increase with the Philadelphia area market wing sales increasing +19 percent.

A sure bet for Super Bowl 2026: Americans love football and wings!



FIELDS OF CHANGE

GROWING A STRONGER COOK COUNTY TOGETHER



Throughout 2025, the Cook County Farm Bureau® strengthened its roots in the community - partnering with local farmers, students, families, and non-profits to grow opportunities, deepen connections, and share agriculture's impact across the county.



READ THE FULL REPORT AT

cookcfb.org/ccfb/ccfb-in-action/fields-of-change



Planting Seeds “Daring Adventures”



Katrina J.E. Milton

photograph artistic tiles and architecture, and maybe even ride a camel.

This past month, I have been preparing for my 12-day trip to Morocco, a study tour with the Chicago Farmers. I studied my trip's itinerary, researched the exotic places I will visit, and read travel guides. In preparation, I purchased a travel-friendly puffer coat, hiking boots, and a collapsible bag for all of my 3 oz. carry-on bottles.

My biggest purchase before this trip is a new camera. I bought my first DSLR camera with my mom years ago, late one night after Saturday BINGO together. My new camera is mirrorless, but I will be able to use all of my old lenses with a small attachable adapter.

During my trip, I am looking forward to taking photos the most, because I will be able to share my experiences and memories through them once I return home. I love making photo albums and scrapbooks, and I will post my photos online via social media.

Usually, the most exciting adventure I have in February is driving through snow to work. This February, I will visit mosques and synagogues, shop at spice markets,

Photography is a fun hobby that anyone can easily get into as long as they have a camera – and a little patience and an eye for capturing moments. Famous celebrities that are also shutterbugs include Kenny Rogers, Miley Cyrus, Queen guitarist Brian May, Drew Barrymore, and Leonard Nimoy.

One of my favorite photographers has a unique story. Wilson Bentley, born Feb. 9, 1865, grew up on his family's farm in Jericho, Vermont, where the annual snowfall can reach up to about 120 inches. He used to spend his winters drawing the shape of snowflakes, but he had difficulties because the snowflakes would melt before he could finish drawing.

When he was 17, Bentley's parents saved up enough money to buy him his first camera. Bentley used his camera and a microscope to capture the shape of snowflakes, becoming the world's first-known snowflake photographer.

A children's book, "Snowflake Bentley" written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and illustrated by Mary Azarian, tells his life story. Kirkus reviews describes the children's book as "a lyrical biographical tribute to a farmer ... whose love of snow and careful camera work expanded both natural science and photography."

Books of collections of Bentley's snowflake photographs can still be purchased, as well as his

original photographs and glass slides.

Bentley described snowflakes as "tiny miracles of beauty" and snow crystals as "ice flowers." He saw his photography as work "just as important" as the milk collected by dairy farmers. He once said, "Under the microscope, I found that snowflakes were miracles of beauty; and it seemed a shame that this beauty should not be seen and appreciated by others."

Snow is actually quite beneficial to farmers: it is a natural insulator, protecting crops and soil from cold temperatures and wind, it provides moisture, nitrogen, and sulfur as it melts, and creates a dormancy period for perennial plants, such as fruit trees.

Bentley came from an agricultural background and lived his life on his family's farm. He used his creativity, innovation, and love of STEM to photograph something so simple and small as a snowflake to show the world its wondrous beauty. His photographs helped lead to the start of crystallography, a scientific study that focuses on the arrangement of atoms, ions, and molecules to understand structure, properties, and formation.

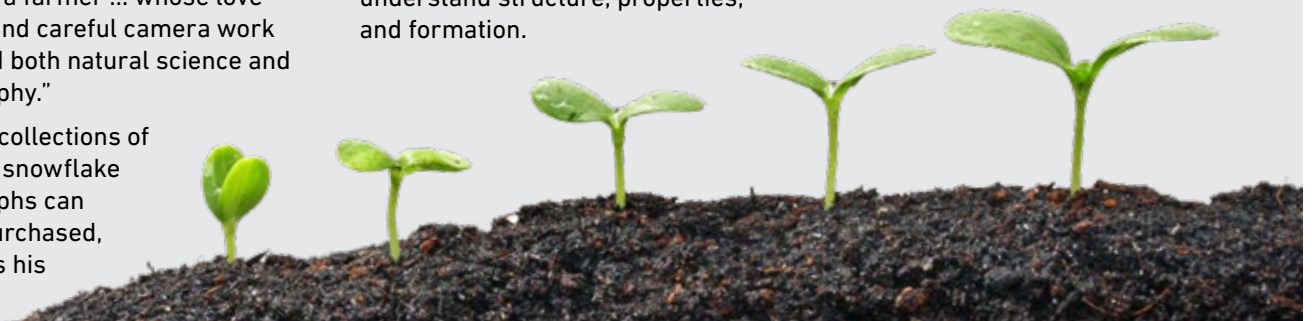


Wilson Bentley Photomicrograph of Stellar Snowflake No 1018

Ultimately, it was Bentley's love of snowflakes that was also his downfall. One evening, he walked home in a blizzard after capturing photos of snowflakes. "The Snowflake Man" became sick with pneumonia and died two weeks later, on Dec. 23, 1931. During the 66 years that Bentley lived, he photographed more than 5,000 snowflakes.

Bentley's love of photography, science, art, and snow is an inspiration to me. I aspire to have his sense of adventure, as well as his ability to document and share, as I travel abroad this month. After all: "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all." ~Helen Keller

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



TEACHERS' CORNER

EDUCATORS: Don't miss these important dates and events!

PDCH WORKSHOP: MARCH 5
OUT OF THIS WORLD AG
Earn two PDs/CPDUs during this free virtual workshop on Zoom featuring an astrobotanist! Email to register.

SPRING MINI GRANT: OPEN FEB. 1-28
Middle and high school educators that teach in Cook County can apply for a grant of up to \$350. Projects must include in-classroom learning, hands-on activities, and a strong agriculture and/or food science connection. Deadline is February 28. Apply online at bit.ly/2026SpringMiniGrant.

SCHEDULE AITC
Don't forget to book our Ag in the Classroom Program for this school year! Visit bit.ly/AITCPlease to bring agricultural education to your classroom.

AG DAY SOUTH: APRIL 7
Ag Day South, a free 2-hour field trip for 3rd graders, will be held at The Children's Farm in Palos Park.

SUMMER AG INSTITUTE: JUNE 11 AND JULY 14
Save the date for SAI 2026! This year's theme is "Agricultural Innovation & Technology." Educators can earn PDCH/CPDUs both days. More information and a full schedule to come soon!

VISIT WWW.COOKCFB.ORG
OR EMAIL AITC@COOKCFB.ORG
FOR MORE INFORMATION



Families Enjoy Our 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.

There are still boxes available to keep you entertained during the cold winter months. Request your box online at bit.ly/Agbookbox or by calling the CCFB at 708-354-3276.

CCFB Members: \$20 if picked up from the CCFB / \$25 if shipped
Non-Members: \$30 if picked up from the CCFB / \$35 if shipped

AGRICULTURE ADVENTURES FOR FAMILIES



Cheer For These Team USA Members Who Are Cook County Natives

(According to <https://www.teamusa.com/hometowns>)

BOBSLED

Dylan Gilbert
Chicago

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

Jesse Compher
Northbrook

SKI JUMPING

Casey Larson
Barrington

SPEED SKATING

Emery Lehman
Oak Park

Kendall Coyne Schofield
Palos Heights

Abbey Murphy
Evergreen Park

PARALYMPIC SLED HOCKEY

Brody Roybal
Northlake

Josh Misiewicz
La Grange

AG CONNECTIONS TO THE WINTER Olympics

Wool (from sheep):

- thermal layers and hats, gloves, and scarves
- socks for sports such as skiing, snowboarding, and speed skating

Natural rubber (from rubber trees):

- shoe and boot soles for speed skating and curling
- handles and grips for ski poles and hockey sticks

Leather (from cattle):

- belts, trims, patches, and badges on uniforms
- Bindings, straps, and grips on skis, snowboards, and sleds
- Gloves for alpine skiing and snowboarding

Plant-based fibers (from cotton, bamboo, flax linen, and hemp):

- base layers and underlayers
- linings inside jackets and pants for comfort
- socks, hats, scarves, and neck gaiters

Leather (from swine):

- shoe and boot linings, overlays, and reinforcements for speed skating and training shoes
- patches, trims, labels, belts, and small accessories on Olympic uniforms and gear

Beeswax (from bees):

- an ingredient in ski and snowboard wax
- seals and protects wooden and leather equipment
- conditions leather gloves, boots, and straps



Celebrate the Olympics With These Italian Mountain Dishes

- **CASUNZIEI** – half-moon-shaped pasta, similar to ravioli, traditionally stuffed with beets, potatoes, and ricotta cheese
- **MANFRIGOLE** – crepes made with a combination of buckwheat and white wheat flour, filled with cheeses
- **PIZZOCCHERI** – a flat ribbon pasta, made with a blend of buckwheat flour and wheat flour, usually served with potatoes, cabbage, and cheese
- **CANEDERLI** – large bread dumplings with Alpine ingredients such as speck (a local cured meat) and cheese



Pizzoccheri

February Word Search

Last Month's Winner:
To Be Announced

Beeswax	X	G	J	R	S	Z	N	G	F	P	P	W	W	L	O
Boots	A	N	F	K	E	X	G	R	N	Z	Y	O	U	L	U
Curling	W	S	I	D	G	H	E	L	S	I	N	M	Y	Q	R
Fiber	S	O	W	W	B	B	T	G	O	S	T	M	D	N	T
Gloves	E	M	K	N	B	Y	H	A	W	V	P	A	Z	H	O
Jacket	E	J	A	U	A	B	H	V	E	I	E	A	K	F	M
Leather	B	V	R	F	I	B	E	R	C	L	C	S	W	S	X
Olympics	L	O	O	W	D	H	S	S	P	N	Q	B	I	B	H
Rubber	G	N	I	L	R	U	C	P	X	Z	O	O	N	S	Q
Skating	N	X	P	G	M	O	K	H	O	N	K	O	T	K	G
Ski	X	Y	D	N	Z	S	E	H	D	R	L	T	E	C	M
Snow	J	A	C	K	E	T	K	C	Z	P	T	S	R	O	E
Socks	K	U	W	N	J	N	J	O	N	J	E	S	Y	S	M
Sports	H	I	U	P	K	Z	V	H	X	Z	P	B	J	S	Z
Winter	Y	N	V	W	S	A	A	M	C	U	Y	M	E	W	J
Wool															

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 (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 2026 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!**



Eggs Aren't Dairy and Other Farm Terms to Know

The veterinarian suggested her patient avoid dairy. The owners read through food and treat labels, making plans to eliminate eggs from their dog's diet.

Milk, cheese, butter ... eggs. The grocery store's layout had taught these consumers that cold case means dairy. Recategorizing eggs as dairy wasn't a commonplace farm mix-up I had heard of or even considered before, but I personally have witnessed a dairy cow give milk and a hen lay an egg. The reality is fewer than 1% of us likely have according to the Census, so here's a quick guide to avoid the 'not-from-around-here' vibe – something I need when visiting Chicago.

Hay and straw are not interchangeable. Animals eat one and sleep on the other. Hay is made from grasses or legumes that are cut, dried and stored to feed animals. Straw is the leftover stalk from grains like wheat or oats. It's great for bedding, insulation or fall décor, but if you offer it as dinner to our cows, they'll stare you down. Literally. Cows are honest like that.

Silo is the catchier term, but most cylindrical farm structures in Illinois are actually bins. A grain bin is round, wide and made of corrugated shiny steel. It stores dried grains like corn, soybeans and wheat. Silos are skinny, tall and narrow structures often made of brown-gray concrete or blue smooth steel. They hold moist animal feeds like silage. Both store farm products but avoid misspeaking in conversation with a farmer.

Not every piece of equipment with big tires is a tractor. Some are. Some are combines. Some are sprayers. Some pull things. Some do things. I get it. I still can't name all the tillage tools correctly. Likewise, not every cow is a cow unless you know it's a mamma. But to avoid studying anatomy and adding bull, steer and heifer to the vocabulary, "cattle" safely sums up the herd in the plural.

Please know that not every egg can produce a chick. Field corn and sweet corn look similar until you eat them. Generally, barns hold animals and sheds store equipment and tools. The exception is barndominiums, the new hybrid. And avoid saying dirt, especially in front of our FFA soils coach.

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.



2026 Focus on the Future: Sustaining Farm Legacy

March 2 **Champaign** June 30 **Sycamore** Aug. 25 **Mt. Vernon**

Illinois Extension and Illinois Farm Bureau are here to provide resources, networking opportunities, and support with three new, informative events specifically for Illinois farmland owners and agricultural stakeholders.

Cost: \$20. CEU credits are available for Certified Crop Advisors. Hybrid online option available for each location.

Learn more and register at

go.illinois.edu/FarmLegacy

Contact Reagen Tibbs at rgtibbs@illinois.edu with questions or to request accommodations.



College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils, Coordinating University of Illinois Extension's systems equal opportunity in programs and employment. © 2025 University of Illinois Board of Trustees. All rights reserved. For more information, please visit www.illinois.edu. Contact: extension@illinois.edu.

Cook County Farm Bureau®

COOKFRESH COMMUNITY URBAN GARDEN GRANT PROGRAM

Supplemental funding for community gardens to be used for plantings, seeds, garden supplies and materials, in Cook County during the 2026 season.

Six (6) awards of \$350.00 each will be granted to community gardens in Cook County; grant funds must be used at select CCFB member business.

Grant application date deadline is February 28, 2026.

Editable application available online: <https://cookcfb.org/stay-updated/-/events-and-programs/community-programs/profile/grants-1> or email: ccfb@cookcfb.org.



Growing Together: Cook County Urban Agriculture Survey

Urban agriculture plays a vital role in strengthening communities, improving food access, and supporting local economies across Cook County. We are inviting urban growers to share their experiences, needs, and priorities so we can better understand the services, information, and advocacy that would most effectively support your work.

The results of this survey will be used to **shape future programs and resources** and to help form an **Urban Agriculture Leadership Circle**, bringing growers together to inform policy, elevate shared challenges, and guide collective action. Your input will directly influence how support for urban agriculture is developed in Cook County.

Urban growers are encouraged to complete the survey at <https://cookfarmbureau.wufoo.com/forms/k9l6z4g00e6b5x/>.



Grant Assistance/Clarification: Contact Debbie Voltz at 708-354-3276 or membershipdebbie@cookcfb.org

Manifolds, Manolos, and Manure

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

Planted by Members, Grown into Policy: Farm Bureau's 2026 Agenda



Bona Heinsohn

As Cook County Farm Bureau leaders approved their County Legislative Priorities for 2026, the Illinois Farm Bureau Board of Directors also approved state legislative priorities. These priorities establish targeted issues that Farm Bureau will dedicate staff time and resources to in the coming years. Priorities include:

Family Farm Preservation Act, or more simply, the estate tax. Farm Bureau is seeking to secure passage of the Family Farm Preservation Act. Farm Bureau believes that Illinois legislators have the shared goal of keeping family farms together and preventing corporate farm consolidation solely due to the state's estate tax policy. Updating the Illinois Estate Tax is critical to this goal.

Illinois family farm estates are unique in that the vast majority of the estate value is not in liquid assets. The bulk of the value comes from land value and machinery, which means that to pay the Illinois Estate Tax, beneficiaries typically must sell off parts of the family farm or take on long-term debt. Family farmers continue to struggle with how to keep their farms in their families.

Wetlands, Farm Bureau will work to prevent overburdensome regulations and ensure that any regulation of farmland provides clarity and certainty for farmers and landowners

and works consistently with existing federal protections.

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruled in *Sacket v. United States E.P.A.* that the Clean Water Act only applies to wetlands that are "indistinguishable" from "waters of the United States" by having a contiguous surface connection. The Clean Water Act was never intended to regulate "isolated" wetlands or low-lying areas that may, occasionally, accumulate water during periods of heavy rain. Farm Bureau supported *Sacket* and the appropriate restriction on the U.S.E.P.A.'s excessive regulatory framework that created confusion and uncertainty for landowners.

Illinois property owners have myriad experiences with inconsistent wetland delineation determinations and application of wetlands regulations. These delineation determinations have jeopardized their farm operations and any federal programs in which they are participating.

Food Labeling, Farm Bureau will advocate for the proper labeling of animal food products, such that products labeled as "meat" or products that are derived from animals. Two years ago, Cook County Farm Bureau's policy submittal on food labeling addressed non-meat products being labeled as "meat."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture approved the first commercial sales of "cultivated" meat in 2023, allowing companies to produce protein by multiplying animal cells in

controlled, vat-based environments. As both cell-cultured products and a growing range of plant-based alternatives enter the marketplace, Farm Bureau maintains that consumers must be able to easily distinguish between conventionally raised livestock products and alternative proteins.

Clear labeling protects the integrity of Illinois agriculture, supports fair competition, and maintains consumer confidence in the food system. When plant-based or cell-cultured products are allowed to use terms traditionally associated with animal agriculture, it contributes to marketplace confusion and creates unfair competition for livestock and dairy producers who operate under rigorous safety and animal care standards.

Other priorities include:

- Support for future markets for biofuels. Biofuels have the ability to decarbonize the transportation sector while supporting agriculture.
- Updates to the Illinois Farmland Assessment Law to ensure the formula is being implemented in an accurate manner consistent with current economic conditions. Cook County is exempt from the law, and farmland instead can be eligible for a special property tax incentive.
- Maintain farmers' ability to apply restricted-use pesticides, while working to prevent any further burdensome regulations.

- Maintain the Department of Agriculture and Illinois Natural Resource Conservation Service funding arrangement for the permanency of 40 conservation planners supporting the (Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy) NLRs and Conservation Reserve Program.

- Continue efforts to reduce nutrient losses to Illinois waters by relying on voluntary, incentive-based NLRs and conservation programs and partnerships.

- Advocate for balancing the protection of private property rights with the appropriate development of projects impacting farmland, especially as demand for renewable energy, broadband installation, and carbon capture projects increases.

- Maintain a balanced process for siting livestock farms through the Livestock Management Facilities Act (LMFA) that protects both the environment and farmers' ability to raise livestock.

- Work to maintain adequate state funding for key Illinois Department of Agriculture programs like meat/poultry/egg inspectors, environmental programs, warehouse oversight, and the veterinarian program.

Legislative priorities are the direct result of the grassroots policy process. Members interested in any of the priorities above or other pertinent agricultural issues are encouraged to become involved in the policy development process by contacting Bona Heinsohn at bona@cookcfb.org.



Farm Bureau Delivers Donations to Cook County Food Pantry

Stephenson and Cook County Farm Bureaus donated gallons of milk to Pat's Pantry in the Mount Greenwood neighborhood of Chicago. Pat's Pantry is housed in the Mount Greenwood Community Church and serves families from the nearby neighborhoods. The pantry is in the 35th House District, which is represented by Representative Mary Gill, who is "adopted" by the Stephenson County Farm Bureau through Farm Bureau's Adopt-a-Legislator® program. Pictured left to right are Victoria Hansen, Stephenson County Farm Bureau; Theresa, pantry volunteer; Steve Fricke, Stephenson County Farm Bureau; Kathy Turney, Pat's Pantry; State Representative Mary Gill; Scott Brenner, Stephenson County Farm Bureau; and Bona Heinsohn, Cook County Farm Bureau.

Cook County Policies Added to AFBF Policy Book

During the delegate meeting in January in Anaheim, California, 333 delegates, including 11 from Illinois, discussed the need for a reliable agricultural workforce.

Two H-2A proposals submitted by Cook Farm Bureau through Illinois Farm Bureau were approved, including streamlining the H-2A application process by using electronic application filing and lengthening the term of stay for H-2A workers.

New policy language also includes support for production agriculture employers to hire and retain H-2A guest workers on a contract with a

three-year duration, utilizing staggered entry and exit dates to maintain compliance with an annual "touchback" (or "return to home") requirement.

Delegates also supported the elimination of the adverse effect wage rate.

Cook County Farm Bureau has a successful track record of elevating local member voices to the national level through its grassroots policy process. Prior successes include policy on food waste, urban agriculture, and community-supported agriculture. Members are encouraged to bring forth issues impacting their farms.

CCFB 2026 County Legislative Priorities Established

Farm Bureau leaders renewed their commitment to preserving and expanding agricultural opportunities in Cook County. County legislative priorities include:

We will work to ensure that farmland in Cook County is assessed in a fair and reasonable manner. Additionally, we will work with the Cook County Assessor's Office to further streamline the farmland affidavit process.

We will work with the forest preserve district to ensure that hay and row crop farming opportunities remain available to local farmers interested in pursuing rental agreements with the district. If requested, Farm Bureau will provide

assistance with advertising available parcels, the rental process, paperwork, and deadlines.

We will work to ensure that urban agriculture, which encompasses a wide range of activities involving the raising, cultivation, processing, marketing, and distribution of food in urban and suburban settings, remains permissible and economically successful under municipal and county ordinances.

Farm Bureau will actively work to implement Farm Bureau's policies on urban agriculture and food access. Farm Bureau policies are developed and proposed by members through a grassroots process.

We will work with the Cook County Department of Building and Zoning regarding local farms, farm buildings, and the farm exemption process in unincorporated Cook County. If requested, Farm Bureau will assist farmer members with the exemption process.

We will actively work to ensure that modern farming practices are not deemed a nuisance under Cook County ordinances.

We will actively work to build relationships with Cook County elected officials and their staffs.

Members interested in learning more are encouraged to contact Bona Heinsohn at bona@cookcfb.org.

COUNTRY Financial MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT

The following Agents/Advisors have been selected by the Country Financial District Leaders to represent their District for this month.

Orland Park Agency – Sharon Stemke, District Leader **MICHAEL SPADONI – FINANCIAL ADVISOR**

Mike supports the Cook County Farm Bureau by writing COUNTRY Insurance for members. He also frequently refers members to benefits offered by Cook County Farm Bureau, specifically the new towing benefit provided by Chicago 24 Hour Towing. Mike helps his clients by educating them on the coverage they have and the coverages they may need. Conducting annual policy reviews ensures that his clients are protected if that once-in-a-lifetime claim happens.



Mike has been active in his community in various volunteer and coaching positions through the years. In addition, he provides monetary support by way of sponsorship to Brother Rice High School and to St John Fisher Fight Night.

5003 W 95th St, Oak Lawn, IL 60453
Office Phone (708) 425-1825
Cell Phone (773) 663-5934
michael.spadoni@countryfinancial.com
with COUNTRY Financial since 06/2005

Chicago South Agency – Alonzo Nevarez, District Leader **TIM PERCHINSKI – FINANCIAL ADVISOR**

Tim supports the Cook County Farm Bureau by participating in Food Checkout Day. In the past, he has served on the Member Relations Committee. He is a big supporter of the Cook County Farm Bureau and recommends it because he believes in the value provided for his clients.



Tim and his office staff take pride in the fact that they answer their phones and are prompt in calling clients back. Tim helps his clients by reviewing their financial situation and making appropriate recommendations for them. He conducts annual reviews to make sure they have what they need to support their success.

Tim is very active in his community. He has been a Village Trustee for Steger for 15 years, is Vice President of the Steger Kiwanis Club, and has been a volunteer for 20+ years with Alicia's House.

29 E Steger Rd, Steger, IL 60475
Office Phone (708)-754-7300
Cell Phone (708) 638-1042
Tim.perchinski@countryfinancial.com

with COUNTRY Financial since 12/2002

Please go to <https://cookcfb.org/membership/become-a-member/country-financial-connection> to view the full article.

New Member Benefits for 2026...

Abenity Is Now a New and Improved Discount Portal!

Great news—your perks program just got an upgrade! BenefitHub is now the name of our member portal. You can use your existing login credentials (from Abenity) to sign in and access exclusive deals and savings on thousands of your favorite brands, all in one place.



Save Big. Every Day. Start exploring today and make the most of your perks!

Updates to Ford Membership Program



ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU MEMBERS RECEIVE
\$500 EXCLUSIVE CASH REWARD^{1,2}
on an Eligible New Ford Truck¹
or Ford Blue AdvantageTM
Certified Used Vehicle².

BUILT FORD TOUGH

Visit FordRecognizesU.com/FarmBureau today for complete offer details!

\$500 Exclusive Cash Reward Beginning with the 2026 program year, you must be a Farm Bureau member for 90 consecutive days (previously 30 days) prior to the purchase or lease of an eligible new Ford truck or Ford Blue Advantage certified used vehicle to take advantage of the \$500 Exclusive Cash Reward. Program runs from January 3, 2026 – January 2, 2027.

Case IH Increased Member Incentives

Effective January 1, 2026 Farm Bureau members will receive deeper incentives on eligible equipment at Cash IH.
To view incentives, visit myifb.org



Update/Create Your MarketMaker Profile!

Cook County Farm Bureau helps promote farmer to consumer market connections through MarketMaker on the organization's website www.cookcfb.org. Have you created a free profile for your farm or food business on MarketMaker? Get listed on our Live Local, Shop Local online directory, powered by MarketMaker, where you can market your business to customers who are searching for agricultural products across Illinois.

Traffic across MarketMaker profiles is up...and that means people are searching profiles more than ever! Now's a great time to login and get started so

you don't miss out on potential customer searches and activity.

MarketMaker allows customers to easily search for farms and businesses based on the products they are looking for.

Register your FREE profile today and reach new customers.

1. Visit foodmarketmaker.com to get started.
2. Click on the orange "Sign In" button in the upper right-hand corner of the MarketMaker page.
3. You can sign up securely with your Google, Amazon, or Facebook logins. Or sign up with an email and password.
4. Add affiliations to your

profile to indicate which organizations your business belongs to and the types of products you sell. This allows your business to be seen across multiple networks and search platforms within affiliate websites. For example, indicating you're an ISGA member will promote your business on the MarketMaker search engine designed specifically for the ISGA website.

5. Add the e-commerce option or link to an existing store.
6. Check out the Buy/Sell Forum for product listings and advertising.
7. Connect with customers!

For technical support, email contact@foodmarketmaker.com.



**250 Years of Progress —
Come Together to
Celebrate American Ag**



Celebrate National Ag Day

Cook County third grade educators, join us on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, as we celebrate National Ag Day at the Children's Farm at the Center in Palos Park.

This two-hour program will rotate students through learning stations to help them understand the importance of agriculture in Illinois including livestock, horticulture, and locally grown crops. Program provides pre- and post-engagement activities and connects with curriculum and state and national standards. The event is free to attend, just supply your own transportation.

Visit bit.ly/AGDaySouth to reserve your spot!

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.

WANTED

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

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

Cook CFB Receives Pollinator and Nutrient Stewardship Grants to Support its Efforts in Conservation

Committed to protecting Illinois' resources and the environment through farmer-led, locally developed programs, Illinois Farm Bureau awarded grants for nutrient stewardship and pollinator projects to county Farm Bureaus, including Cook County Farm Bureau.

The Environmental Stewardship Grants support the education, outreach, and implementation for nutrient management and pollinator restoration, providing direct funding to support county Farm Bureau projects.

The Cook CFB Nutrient Stewardship Grant project continues its support of research on utilization of struvite (magnesium

ammonium phosphate) as a slow-release phosphate fertilizer that could be used to minimize nutrient loss. The Farm Bureau is expecting to publish a paper with struvite proposed as a best management practice to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus losses. Cook CFB will also host urban field days with specialty growers.

The Nutrient Stewardship Grant program is part of Farm Bureau's ongoing commitment to furthering the state's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs). The program was developed to engage all levels of Farm Bureau in the NLRs. Projects have focused on four priority areas: education, research support, support for farmer implementation, and

communication of progress toward the long-term goals of the Illinois NLRs.

Cook CFB's Pollinator Conservation Grant project includes continuing its partnership with the Lincoln Park Zoo and developing a new partnership with Global Gardens and the Chicago Park District to provide signage and field day support for a new pollinator park and urban garden site.

The Pollinator Conservation Grant Program provides Farm Bureaus and farmers with opportunities to engage in locally led pollinator projects.

To learn more about Cook CFB's projects, contact Bona Heinsohn at bona@cookcfb.org

This Month in Cook County Agriculture

Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District to Elect Directors:

Notice has been provided that all owners and occupiers of land lying in the boundaries of the Will-South Cook SWCD can attend the election of directors meeting on February 11, 2026 at 6:00 pm at 1201 Gougar Road, New Lenox.

SWCD SPRING 2026 TREE AND FISH SALE:

The Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District is now taking orders for the Spring 2026 Tree and Fish Sale! Order forms are available on the district website (will-scookswcd.org) or can be picked up at the District office during business hours.

The District has a wide variety of plants, shrubs, trees, and groundcover available this spring. Fish varieties for sale include Black Crappie, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Redear Sunfish, Triploid Grass Carp, Rainbow Trout, Bluegill, and minnows.

Fish orders must be received by Monday, March 16. Grass Carp orders require the permit information on the bottom of the form to be filled in completely. Tree orders are due by Friday, March 27. All orders are prepaid only.

Tree orders will be available for pick-up April 9 and 10 during regular business hours. Fish orders will be available for pick-up on Saturday, April 11 from 11 a.m. -2 p.m. only. Pick-up is located at the Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District Office, 1201 S. Gougar Road, New Lenox.

For more information or order forms, please call 815-462-3106, ext. 3 or email info@will-scookswcd.org.

FARMWEEK FEATURE

Illinois Pig Breaks Skateboarding Record

An Illinois pig has earned international recognition for its skateboarding antics.

Norbert the Pig from Buffalo Grove earned a Guinness World Record when he showed off his skateboarding swine skills and took a 33-foot ride in just over 11 seconds, according to UPI's "Odd News, Funny News, Strange News." Norbert's record for the fastest pig pushing a

skateboard 10 meters is 11.32 seconds.

Vincent Baran, Norbert's owner, said he discovered the pet pig's impressive talent when he found his old skateboard at his home in a village in both Lake and Cook counties.

"I had my board from when I was a kid and figured I'd try him with it," he said. "I went outside, laid the board down and took out some unsalted peanuts as treats. In about 15 minutes, I had him standing on the board. After a couple more sessions, he was pushing himself down the street."

Baran said 175-pound Norbert now "looks like a natural on the board" and loves showing off his skills.

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

"T"

TURMERIC



Turmeric is a member of the Zingiberaceae family, alongside ginger, and shares many similarities with its sibling.

Plants typically grow 3 to 4 feet tall, with each clump spreading 1 to 2 feet wide.

It produces tall, upright leafy shoots and spreads gradually, making it ideal for containers or garden beds.

Is a tropical herbaceous perennial best known for its bold orange-yellow underground rhizomes.



TURMERIC'S VIBRANT COLOR HAS BEEN USED TO TINT FABRIC, FOOD, AND EVEN EASTER EGGS!

Turmeric powder is used in curries, soups, rice, and even smoothies for color and earthy warmth.

Turmeric boasts digestive properties as it supports digestion.



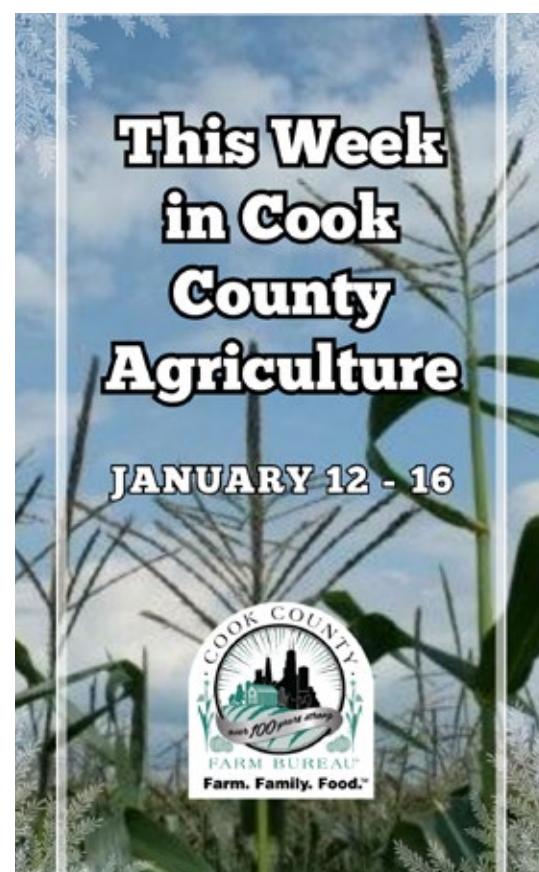
TURMERIC GROWS TO APPROXIMATELY ONE METER IN HEIGHT AND IS GATHERED FOR THE RHIZOMES.



It has a bold, earthy flavor with a slightly bitter, peppery edge and hints of mustard or ginger.

Cook CFB is Now on TikTok

Follow [Cook.CFB](https://www.tiktok.com/@cookcfb) on TikTok and stay informed, one week at a time.



Cook CFB is officially on TikTok! Each week, we're bringing you "This Week in Agriculture", a quick, engaging roundup of the latest agriculture news, trends, and insights that matter to producers and agribusinesses.

From market updates to policy highlights and industry happenings, it's agriculture made easy to follow, all in under a minute.

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 Monday 2026

Are you a new or existing 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 with Q&A.

LOCATION: Zoom; link will be emailed the Friday prior

DATE: Monday, February 23, 2026

TIME: 4:00-4:30 p.m. with Q & A

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

2026 Community Urban Garden Grant Program

All community-based urban gardens in Cook County are encouraged to apply for a \$350 grant for use during the 2026 growing season. Grant details and applications are being accepted through February 28, 2026. Grants awarded mid-March 2026.



APPLY ONLINE: <https://cookcfb.org/stay-updated/-/events-and-programs/community-programs/profile/grants-1> (scan QR code) or by emailing: ccfb@cookcfb.org.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Apply by Saturday, Feb 28, 2026
QUESTIONS: Call 708-354-3276 with questions or for a paper copy.

Beginning Beekeeping Course at the CCFB

If you have 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

check by calling 708-354-3276 or CCFB members online via Member Account at: <https://www.myifb.org/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2f>

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

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

REGISTRATION: Registration and payment is required in advance by credit card or

Workshop on Preparing Wills and Trusts and Transferring Non-Titled Property (Estate Planning and Trust Administration),

Presented by Thomas J. Olofsson, J.D., Estate Planning Attorney

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

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

TIME: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION: Call the CCFB at 708-354-3276

DATE: Tuesday, March 10, 2026

FREE for members (\$10 non-members)

Knead to Know: How Agriculture Feeds Your Sourdough

Join us for an immersive sourdough prep experience where flour, fermentation, and farming come together. You'll get your hands dusty as you learn how to build and care for a sourdough starter, taste a range of beautifully baked sourdough breads, and take home recipes you'll actually want to bake again. Along the way, we'll dig into what makes great sourdough great—from the wheat in the field to the flour in your bowl – and how agricultural choices influence flavor, texture, and aroma in every loaf.

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

TIME: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. **FEE:** \$25

REGISTRATION: Call the FB office at 708-354-3276 or online in the Member Center. Limited number of participants.

DATE: Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Coming Up in April 2026 at the CCFB

Member Wellness / Health Fair Tuesday, April 21

Earth Day Party Wednesday, April 22

Natural Soap Making 101 Monday, April 27

COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU®
CELEBRATES FOOD CHECKOUT DAY 2026

SUPPORTING LOCAL FAMILIES, FOOD PANTRIES, AND COMMUNITIES

FOOD CHECKOUT DAY 2026 SPONSOR PACKAGE

Cook County Farm Bureau® members and partners are once again celebrating the healthy, nutritious food grown and raised by local farmers, and sharing that abundance with neighbors in need.

Now in its 26th year, Food Checkout Day connects the generosity of local agriculture with families across Cook County. We invite you to partner with us in supporting local families while gaining meaningful community exposure through social, digital, and print media coverage.

\$250 SPONSOR BENEFITS

SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE
6.9k followers across Facebook and Instagram, TikTok- launching January 2026

PRINT AND DIGITAL MEDIA INCLUSION
30k addresses Co-Operator publication and electronic newsletters

EVENT RECOGNITION
Sponsors will be acknowledged during the event

WHAT WE ASK IN RETURN

SPREAD THE WORD
Share Food Checkout Day posts on your social media channels and with your contacts

EVENT PARTICIPATION
Join us in person to assist with event activities and help make a direct impact in the community

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A Difference
YOUR PARTNERSHIP HELPS CONNECT LOCAL FARMERS, BUSINESSES, AND FAMILIES, TURNING COMPASSION INTO ACTION.

FOOD CHECKOUT DAY 2026 PARTNERSHIP

Donate online at <https://ccfb.betterworld.org/events/support-food-checkout-day-2026>

Your Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Please make checks payable to Cook County Farm Bureau. Checks should be mailed to Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525. To donate using a credit card, contact the Farm Bureau office at (708) 354-3276.

All proceeds will be donated to Cook County food pantries.

Cook County Farm Bureau® members and partners are once again celebrating the healthy, nutritious food grown and raised by local farmers- and sharing that abundance with neighbors in need.

Now in its 26th year, Food Checkout Day highlights agriculture's essential role in feeding families and communities across Cook County. This year's effort will continue the long-standing Farm Bureau tradition of giving back through food and cash donations to local food pantries.

Members who wish to make a monetary contribution can do so by completing the form. Donations may be directed to one of our partner food pantries:

Northfield Food Pantry, Glenview, serves between 850 and 900 families per month and has recently expanded its reach to meet growing community needs. Northfield Township includes all or parts of Deerfield, Glencoe, Glenview, Northbrook, Northfield, Prospect Heights, and Wilmette.

Respond Now, Chicago Heights, serves more than 22 Chicago south suburban communities and over 20,000 households. Through volunteers' efforts they're able to keep over 125 families in their homes, prepare more than 18,000 bags of food, and provide more than 133 local families with utility assistance.

YOUNG LEADERS LAUNCH HYGIENE PRODUCT DRIVE

The Cook County Farm Bureau Young Leaders Committee invites members to join their "Buy One Extra" Hygiene Product Drive, an extension of this year's Food Checkout Day celebration.

When shopping for personal care items, consider purchasing an extra to donate to families in need. Items most in demand include soap, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, dental floss, and baby care essentials.

Donations can be dropped off at any of the following locations:

- Cook County Farm Bureau Office- 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside
- Wagner Farm- 1510 Wagner Road, Glenview
- Ted's Greenhouse- 16930 84th Avenue, Tinley Park

FOOD CHECKOUT DAY 2026 • FOOD PANTRY DONATION

Food Pantry Name: _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

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

SCAN THE QR to DONATE ONLINE

Please make checks payable to Cook County Farm Bureau. Checks should be mailed to Cook County Farm Bureau, 6438 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525. All proceeds will be donated to Cook County food pantries. Donations will be accepted until March 2, 2026.