



*Cook County Farm Bureau's*

# Investment in Our Local Communities

## 2021 REPORT







# **Cook County Farm Bureau Remains Engaged in the Community**

Throughout 2020 and 2021, Cook County Farm Bureau® has remained engaged and committed to partnering with and supporting local farmers, students, and non-profits.



## Support for farmers

Cook County Farm Bureau continues to support farmers through marketing enhancement programs like 'Live Local, Shop Local' and 'Local Farm Products' locator both of which connect farmers to consumers and consumers to local fresh produce, local dairy products, breweries, and more. Both tools are available at [cookcfb.org](http://cookcfb.org).

In addition to marketing tools, Farm Bureau supports local farmers through advocacy at the local, state, and national levels. Farm Bureau leaders continue to advise the Assessor's office and the Department of Building and Zoning regarding agriculture and farms in the county. Recently, when Cook County updated the Zoning Code regarding the keeping of animals, the Farm Bureau was not only an active participant in the discussion, but also negotiated language favorable to the care and keeping of livestock, including horses.

For many decades, the Cook County Farm Bureau has assisted farm owners in filing property tax appeals and protests. The Illinois Farmland Assessment Act of 1977 specified that farmland is assessed based on soil productivity as opposed to fair market value in 101 Illinois counties. However, the Act excludes Cook County and does not specify how farmland in the county would be assessed. Farm Bureau leaders identified this oversight and immediately met with the Cook County President and Assessor to develop the Farmland Affidavit and valuation process. The Farmland Affidavit can be credited as one of the reasons that Cook County agriculture continues to flourish and grow today.



## Support for service members

Farm Bureau's Young Leader Committee has historically provided support for local non-profits including donations of food, clothing, and toys. In 2021 Young Leaders hosted a care packing event for the United Service Organization (USO). Along with volunteers they collected and then packed non-perishable foods, snacks, drink mixes, toiletries, and related items to mail to troops.

# Food pantry support

Throughout the year, visits to local food pantries increased on average by more than 50% and at times up to 150% during the height of the pandemic. Cook County Farm Bureau volunteers, members, and partners rallied to provide direct assistance to over 7,400 individuals in the county. Through in-person efforts to purchase and deliver food and member donations to partner food pantries; online engagement to raise awareness of area food pantries, their

needs, and service areas; and a grant program for local food pantries to expand their food offerings or facilities in light of unprecedented need.

Farm Bureau is continuing efforts to support families in need in 2022. In celebration of the healthy and nutritious food grown and raised by local farmers, Cook County Farm Bureau® members and partners are supporting local families and food pantries.







The year 2022 marks the 22nd anniversary of Food Checkout Day and Cook County Farm Bureau's largest effort to date to support local families in need.

For additional information or to support Cook County food pantries, visit <https://bit.ly/3FY7895>.







## Agricultural scholarships

In 2021, the Cook County Farm Bureau® Foundation awarded \$16,000 to 7 students pursuing an agriculture-related degree. The scholarship program is designed to provide college students pursuing a degree in agriculture, agribusiness, or agriculture-related course of study with financial support, sent directly to the school. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of scholastic ability and financial need.

Applicants must be Farm Bureau members or dependents of Farm Bureau members in good standing.

# Agricultural literacy

Cook County Farm Bureau remains committed to educating youth about agriculture. During the 2020-2021 school year, Agricultural Literacy presenters connected with over 12,700 Cook County youth in over 550 classrooms.

Teachers can request a free in-person or virtual presentation by visiting <https://bit.ly/3ppna4E>. Additional educational resources for teachers and families are available on the Farm Bureau's website, [cookcfb.org](http://cookcfb.org).





## Support of local non-profits

As a non-profit Cook County Farm Bureau is acutely aware of the power of non-profit associations and the tremendous outcomes that can occur when non-profit entities work together for a common outcome. To that end, Farm Bureau financially supported Wagner Farm in Glenview, Lake County Fair Animal Auction, Greater Chicagoland Food Depository, and Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana.

Similarly, Farm Bureau has financially supported like-minded groups including the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Foundation, Illinois Specialty Growers, Cook DuPage Beekeepers Association, Chicago Farmers organization, and the Animal Agriculture Alliance.





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