



IMPACT REPORT 2024

PURDUE EXTENSION-SPENCER COUNTY

FOREWORD

As we reflect on the work of Purdue Extension-Spencer County in 2024, it is with great pride and gratitude that we share the stories of impact, growth, and community engagement from this past year. Through the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners, we have continued to fulfill our mission to provide accessible educational opportunities that help individuals and families thrive, both now and in the future.

This report showcases how our programs—spanning 4-H, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Health & Human Sciences, Community Development, and Community Health & Wellness—have empowered individuals of all ages to grow, learn, and contribute to the well-being of Spencer County. Whether it's through fostering leadership and life skills in youth, supporting sustainable agricultural practices, promoting healthy lifestyles, or strengthening community ties, Purdue Extension is an educational partner for life.

The programs and initiatives detailed in these pages not only address the current needs of our community but also position us for future success by creating a foundation of knowledge, collaboration, and resilience. The participants in our programs, ranging from youth in 4-H to adults seeking personal development, have found new ways to connect with each other, expand their horizons, and contribute to a brighter future for Spencer County.

We are deeply grateful for the partnership of community and government leaders, organizations, and families who have joined us in this journey. As you explore this report, we invite you share your input with us to ensure we can continue to help address the needs of our community.

Nicholas Held
County Extension Director
Extension Educator, Agriculture & Natural Resources
Extension Educator, Community Development

WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION

We deliver practical, research-based information that enhances lives and livelihoods.

OUR VISION

We will be a leader in providing relevant, high-impact educational programs that transform the lives and livelihoods of individuals and communities in Indiana and the world. .

WHAT WE DO

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Serve as a research based, unbiased information source for county and state constituents on a variety of topics including: crops, ag business, livestock, natural resource, horticulture, small farms, urban ag, pesticide use, and land conservation.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Prepare young people to be leaders in their community and around the world through hands-on experiences alongside their peers and caring adults.

HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

Provide education to people of all ages in Indiana's 92 counties. The community is our classroom - where we bring university information to the local level and help people strengthen families, spend smart, eat right, and live well.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Strengthen the capacity of local leaders, residents, businesses, and organizations to build resilient, inclusive and sustainable communities through research-based resources and processes.

NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Works to make the healthy choice the easy choice where limited-resource Hoosiers live, eat, work, play and shop. The program is supported by two U.S. Department of Agriculture educational programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

MEET THE TEAM



NICHOLAS HELD

County Extension Director, Extension Educator - Agriculture & Natural Resources, Community Development



JENNIFER MAYO

Extension Educator - 4-H Youth Development



MEGAN JASPERSEN

Extension Educator - Health & Human Sciences



ERIN MEYER

Community Wellness Coordinator



DANICA WILLIAMS

Nutrition Education Program Advisor



KARA DILGER

Administrative Assistant

SUCCESS STORIES

FOOD AS MEDICINE: PARTNERSHIPS, EDUCATION, AND LOCAL PRODUCE

The first Spencer County **Food As Medicine** program recently concluded and was a huge success. In partnership with the **Spencer County Health Department**, **Gary's Place Community Garden**, and **Cope's Produce Company**, this eight-week program was fully funded by **Health First Indiana** dollars.

Each week participants learned about **combating chronic disease** through healthy eating, exercise, and good health habits. Information was shared on how to make lifestyle changes that aid in the prevention of **heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions**.

Every class featured a recipe demonstration that utilized in-season ingredients that participants could easily replicate at home. Participants not only left armed with information, but each week they were provided with a box of fresh, locally grown produce. Approximately **1,100 pounds of produce** was distributed. One participant shared, *"I loved everything about this class! the information, recipes, food boxes and taste testing!"* Others reported learning **valuable food preparation techniques**, where they can buy local foods in our community, **how to store them**, and **helpful menu planning and budgeting techniques**.



"I've lost 38 lbs, dropped four pants sizes and improved my cholesterol by 25 points since taking this class!" - Myran McCoy, Food as Medicine participant

LEADERSHIP SPENCER COUNTY TRAINS NEW COMMUNITY LEADERS

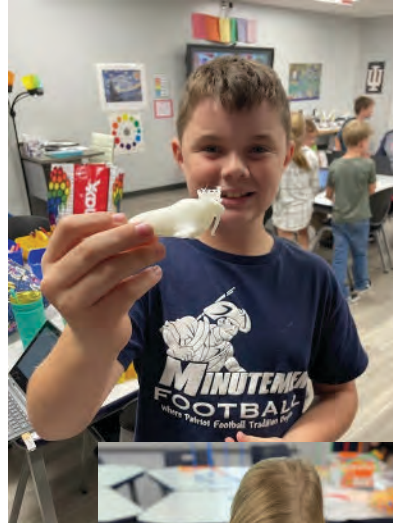
Now in the fifth year of partnership with Purdue Extension, **Leadership Spencer County** continues to grow leaders. Eleven participants completed the class in 2024, taking part in facilitated sessions and activities on a variety of community leadership topics. Upon completion, participants are encouraged to become more involved in the community and take on leadership roles in community groups and organizations. The 2024 class chose to schedule a workday to assist the local **Habitat for Humanity** organization with a home construction project currently underway in the county. Participants rated the class highly, with **100% indicating they felt better prepared to make a difference in the community**, including one participant who noted they learned *"a lot about how to improve my leadership skills, interpersonal relationships and conflict-resolution"*.





INCREASING ACCESS TO STEM EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

Two new **STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)** labs have been added in Spencer County Elementary Schools over the last 2 years as a result of a collaboration among Purdue Extension, Indiana 4-H, and the local elementary schools. Indiana 4-H granted the first **IN-MaC STEM Innovation Lab** at **Chrisney Elementary** in 2024 and **Rockport Elementary** was gifted a STEM lab through the **Spencer County Community Foundation** in late 2024. As a result, Purdue Extension is able to offer **extensive STEM programming to K-6th grade youth** in the classroom, providing them the opportunity to explore the many facets of **STEM career opportunities** while meeting grade level standards.



LOCAL PRODUCERS GAIN INSIGHT ON BIOLOGICALS

The promotion and use of products derived from living organisms, also known as biologicals, as an **alternative for synthetic products** in agricultural pest management and crop fertility have increased in recent years. As a result, producers are seeking information on the effectiveness and return on investment of such products. To help address this need, a biologicals presentation by Purdue specialist Darcy Telenko at the annual **Perry-Spencer Crop Day** program highlighted some early research results on the use of **biologicals for disease management** in corn and soybeans. Additional presentations covered **pesticide recordkeeping updates** and **new pesticide applicator regulations**. Crop Day is a collaboration between Purdue Extension and Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Spencer and Perry Counties. The program was attended by 78 local producers, with a majority indicating a **better understanding of biological fungicides** as a result of attending.



"GROWING TOGETHER" AT WASHINGTON ST. APARTMENTS

The **Growing Together Project** is a competitive grant program facilitated by **Purdue Extension's Nutrition Education Program** (SNAP-Ed) and **Master Gardener Program** that increases access to fruits and vegetables by building and maintaining community donation gardens.

In 2024, Spencer County received a **Growing Together grant** to fund the installation of a raised bed garden at the **Washington Street Apartments** in Rockport. Purdue Extension staff, along with a Master Gardener volunteer, conducted weekly nutrition and gardening sessions with the elderly residents at the apartments, who planted, maintained and harvested produce from the beds. Produce was distributed among the participants or taken to the community room to be shared with other residents. Recipes and ideas were shared with residents on how to prepare the vegetables.

Approximately **170 pounds of fresh produce** were harvested and donated from the garden in 2024.



"I am 94 years old. I had a garden until I moved here to live. You have no idea how much I appreciate this opportunity to garden again and share the garden's abundance with others!" -Growing Together participant

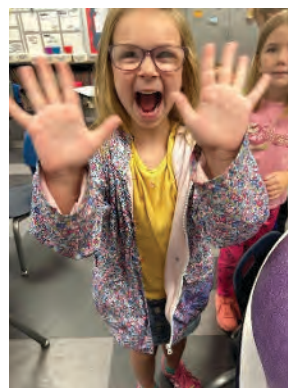


CLEAN HANDS, HEALTHY STUDENTS

It's no secret that washing your hands is one of the best ways to stay healthy. Elementary age students in multiple schools across our county got up close and personal with hand hygiene this year. Purdue Extension brought in **Glow Germ Handwashing** to classrooms so students could utilize black light technology to see spots that they miss while washing their hands.

They learned that **germs are called microorganisms** and discussed **best practices for hand washing**. They put special glow lotion on their hands to simulate germs, which they were able to see under the light. After thoroughly washing their hands, they came back to examine how they did. Most students found that a few **hard-to-clean spots** were still glowing!

Did you know it is most effective to wash your hands for **at least 20 seconds**, which is approximately the amount of time it takes to sing your ABCs? Students were given the challenge to wash their hands as well as they did for our activity every time they step up to the sink. We are confident they can succeed!



STUDENTS GROW GARDENS AND EAT HEALTHY

"Lettuce" Eat Healthy, a Purdue Extension collaboration with local schools since 2012, teaches youth about **vegetable gardening, plant science** and **proper nutrition** through interactive sessions and hands-on activities during the school day. Students plant lettuce, radishes, onions and spinach in raised-bed gardens at the schools, care for the plants through the growing season and enjoy salads made from the vegetables at the end of the program.

In 2024, the program was offered at 6 **elementary schools** (David Turnham, Lincoln Trail, Nancy Hanks, Chrisney, Luce and Rockport) and reached over **200 students**. In addition, new raised beds were installed at Nancy Hanks and Lincoln Trail in 2024, resulting in all 6 schools now having **permanent gardens** that can be utilized throughout the growing season.

Each year, during the last session, students report **trying (and often liking) a new food** as result of the program. And while many students report having prior vegetable gardening experience, for some it's their **first time growing their own food**.



ENGAGING NEW AUDIENCES AND EXPANDING 4-H OPPORTUNITIES

Spencer County 4-H enrollment is at an all time high, with **458 youth enrolled** in 2024. This increase is due in part to efforts to pursue **nontraditional partnerships** that provide more youth with an opportunity to participate in 4-H.

One example of these partnerships is the **4-H Embers Homeschool 4-H Club**. Youth enrolled in the Embers Homeschool Co-op have **classes focused around 4-H projects**. Youth then exhibit projects they have worked on all semester at the 4-H Fair. This **combination of school curriculum and 4-H** provides families and youth the opportunity for a valuable 4-H experience they may not have otherwise had. These types of community-based partnerships will continue to be pursued.



SECURING THE LOAD AND EARNING CONTINUING EDUCATION

Farmers who purchase and apply restricted-use pesticides on their farms must be certified to do so through Office of Indiana State Chemist requirements. Purdue Extension, through the **Private Applicator Recertification Program (PARP)**, provides training for these certified applicators to maintain their certification. In December, Dr. Fred Whitford presented a topic on **securing and transporting pesticide and fertilizer products** as part of a PARP session offered in Spencer County. Participants learned about **transportation regulations** as well as tips and tricks for making sure products are **transported securely without incident**. Thirty local farmers attended.

In 2024, a total of three PARP sessions were offered in Spencer County, providing **93 applicators** with recertification credit.



NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Danica Williams, **Nutrition Education Program Advisor (NEPA)**, provides direct education to **limited-resource audiences** with **hands-on, practical** programs on stretching food dollars, planning fast, easy and healthy meals, increasing physical activities, and more!

In 2024, programs were held at **David Turnham Ed Center, Rockport Elementary, NOW Counseling**, and **Teen Cuisine** at the **Lincoln Heritage Public Library**. In a program at Rockport Elementary, students enjoyed a fall lettuce harvest from the school garden and sampled turkey wraps made with the lettuce! For most students **this was a first!**

In all programs, participants enjoyed **trying new recipes and activities** and setting **health goals**.



SUMMER COMMUNITY ADVENTURES PROVIDES SUMMER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Purdue Extension continued its partnership with Summer Community Adventures (SCA) in 2024, serving as the lead planning organization. SCA serves youth in grades K-6 by providing weekly educational sessions for 8 weeks during the summer. Educational sessions are led by Extension staff, volunteers and special guest speakers and included health & wellness activities, cooking demonstrations with take-home recipes, and science presentations. Participants also took part in field trips to local sites of interest.

Each week, sessions are coordinated with the summer feeding location at David Turnham Education Center so that students can eat lunch prior to the SCA activities. Students also received take-home bags of fresh, locally grown produce funded through a \$7,000 Owensboro Health grant and bags of non-perishable food from Bags of Blessings. Over 2400 lbs of produce went home with students. Fifty-two youth took part in the program.

"Thank you for taking good care of my child. That programs is awesome!"

Thank you to everyone that was involved! -Summer Community

Adventures Parent





CONTACT US



Purdue Extension-Spencer County

1101 E CR 800 N

Chrisney, IN 47611



8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Monday-Friday



812.362.8066



spencerces@purdue.edu



www.extension.purdue.edu/spencer



facebook.com/PurdueExtensionSpencerCounty



Staff

Nicholas Held - nheld@purdue.edu

Jennifer Mayo - allen393@purdue.edu

Megan Jaspersen - mjaspers@purdue.edu

Erin Meyer - meyer258@purdue.edu

Danica Williams - will1179@purdue.edu

Kara Dilger - kdilger@purdue.edu

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran.

This material may be available in alternative formats.



Extension - Spencer County