

CASS COUNTY EXPRESS

February, March, & April 2026

**NEWSLETTER
HIGHLIGHTS:**

We want to hear
from YOU!
Cass County Needs
Assessment survey.

**4-H FUN
IS FOR
EVERYONE!**

**SWEET POTATO
CHILI.
HEALTHY AND
DELICIOUS. YUM!**



Our team after Duckpin Bowling at the annual staff retreat. Claire won the game!

Left to Right : Vicky Conrad, Rachel Taylor, Emily Sawyer, Claire King, and Kailey Dockerty

NEW YEAR, NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU!



Cass County Needs Assessment online survey.

We want to hear from you! Our 2026 Community Needs Assessment is now LIVE. Please take a minute or two to tell us what kind of programs and events you would like us to offer in Cass County. Use the QR code or link below to take the survey. Thank you for your feedback and time.

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/W6B2YzBUMq>

Purdue Extension Cass County
Annual Needs Assessment 2026



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What's Happening in Health & Human Sciences

By Kailey Dockerty, Health and Human Sciences Extension Educator

Fall 2025 was a productive season for our Health & Human Sciences program. In October and November, we held a Beginner's Guide to Grant Writing Workshop at the Penman Service Center. This event would not have been possible without support from the Logansport Parks Department, Stand UP Cass County, and our outstanding panel speakers. 15 folks from Cass County participated in the program, working on real funding proposals throughout the events. We look forward to hearing from attendees about how the workshop helped them apply for funding opportunities and the impact that their projects will have on the community.

In November, we had our annual staff retreat. In the morning, we had a strategic planning meeting where we made marketing and communications plans for 2026. We also had team-building activities including an antique mall scavenger hunt and ended with duckpin bowling. The day was a lot of fun, and it allowed us time to bond with one another, discuss big-picture ideas, and think outside the box. (Picture on front cover: Left to Right : Vicky Conrad, Rachel Taylor, Emily Sawyer, Claire King, And Kailey Dockerty)



Panel Discussion at the Beginner's Guide to Grant Writing Workshop



Thank you to our outstanding panelists!

Pictured left to right: Karli Armstrong, Chris Armstrong, Vicki Byrd, Adam Johnson, and Lita Rouser

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In November and December, I taught four sessions of I am Moving, I am Learning to early childhood educators at Area Five Head Start. Participants learned how physical activity impacts learning and development for children ages birth to five and beyond. Not only did educators report positive learning outcomes from the event, but these events created more opportunities for Purdue Extension and Area Five to partner up in the service of our community. I am now the chairperson of the Head Start Policy Council and will have their representative on our Board of Directors, as well. Thank you to Area Five for partnering with Purdue Extension!

On December 9, I visited the Coffee Club at Royal Center Boone Township Public Library to teach Staying Scam Safe. The group reported learning practical skills and information in this session. Some participants even set up password keepers and signed up for scam alerts at this class. I will be back at the Coffee Club on February 3 to continue lessons. Thank you to the Royal Center Boone Township Public Library for this wonderful partnership.

As we move into 2026, I look forward to scheduling programs throughout the community and with our partners. Behind the scenes, I am working to update statewide programs like "Where Does Your Money Go?" and creating programs, including Mini Lessons for Child Care Providers. Some of the events we have scheduled are listed in the calendar of this newsletter. If you would like to bring our programs and events to your organization, please call me at 574-753-7750 or email kdockert@purdue.edu.

VEGAN SWEET POTATO CHILI

BY EMILY SAWYER

The new year can be a great time to start new health goals. So, let's try a vegetarian twist on an old favorite—chili! This Sweet Potato chili replaces meat with Bay Bella mushrooms, minced and seasoned; your family will never guess it's vegan! This recipe is packed full of nutritious vegetables and beans while still providing that warm comfort we seek during the cold winter months

INGREDIENTS:

Olive Oil – 3 T

Crimini, A.K.A Baby Bella Mushrooms – 32 oz, washed and minced

Kosher salt -1/2 T

Onion – 8 oz, Minced

Chili Powder – 2 T

Cumin – ground, 1 tsp

Garlic powder – 1 tsp

Onion powder – 1 tsp

Salt – to taste

Pepper – to taste

Sweet Potato – one large, or two small (should weigh 16 oz), diced

Chili Beans – 1, 15 oz can

Kidney Beans – 1, 15 oz can, rinsed

Black Beans – 1, 15 oz can, rinsed

Corn- 1 15 oz can, drained

Diced Tomatoes- 3, 15 oz (42 oz total) can

Tomato Paste – 6 oz can

Water - enough to cover



"I came up with this recipe as an alternative for Meatless Monday. It has since become one of our family favorites. My family can't get enough!"

Emily Sawyer / Recipe Author, Extension Technology Secretary

Instructions:

1. Start with prepping your raw vegetables. Peel and dice the onion and sweet potatoes into 1/4 in. chunks. Wash, dry, and mince the mushrooms. A food processor works best, but rocking your knife repeatedly through them is a good substitute. Salt the mushroom meal with the 1/2 T of Kosher salt so the moisture can start draining for faster cooking.
2. Drain the cans of kidney and black beans in a colander and rinse them in cold water. Drain the can of corn.
3. In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium high till it glimmers. Add the onion and a pinch of salt. Sweat them until translucent.
4. Add the minced mushroom meal, and let a majority of the moisture cook off. Then add chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, onion powder, and pepper. Let it cook, allowing them to become drier and the seasonings to toast.
5. Add sweet potato, beans, corn, tomatoes with juice, and just enough water to cover everything by a half inch of water. Use a spoon to stir the tomato paste into the sauce.
6. Bring to a boil and reduce the temperature to a simmer. Cook covered for 30 min. or till the sweet potatoes are fork-tender. Serve with your favorite garnish and enjoy!

4-H FUN IS FOR EVERYONE!

NEWS FROM YOUR 4-H EDUCATOR,
CLAIRE KING

4-H CAMP 2026- CHAPERONES NEEDED

GET READY FOR A FANTASTIC SUMMER WITH 4-H! CONTACT CLAIRE AT THE CASS COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE WITH ANY QUESTIONS, OR CHECK OUR CAMP PAGE ON THE CASS COUNTY 4-H WEBSITE AT [HTTPS://EXTENSION.PURDUE.EDU/COUNTY/CASS/4-H-YOUTH-DEVELOPMENT/4-H-CAMP.HTML](https://extension.purdue.edu/county/cass/4-h-youth-development/4-h-camp.html)

YOUTH IN GRADES 3-6 ARE INVITED TO ATTEND CAMP THIS SUMMER, JUNE 3-5!
CAMP REGISTRATION WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE SPRING.

PLEASE CONSIDER BEING AN ADULT CHAPERONE AT 4-H CAMP!



2026 Cass County 4-H Handbook



THE 2026 HANDBOOK IS NOW LIVE ON THE PURDUE EXTENSION CASS COUNTY WEBSITE!

EXTENSION.PURDUE.EDU/COUNTY/CASS/4-H-YOUTH-DEVELOPMENT

TEEN LEADERSHIP WEEKEND

You are invited to Indiana 4-H's Teen Leadership Weekend at YMCA Camp Tecumseh, located just 30 minutes from Logansport, on March 27th-29th!

The Teen Leadership Weekend is an exciting opportunity for 4-H members to build their leadership skills, connect with peers from across the state, and prepare to make a positive impact in their communities. Held annually, this conference is designed for youth in grades 7-12 who are ready to take their leadership journey to the next level. Participants engage in hands-on workshops, interactive team activities, and inspiring sessions led by experienced mentors and fellow 4-H members. With a focus on personal growth, teamwork, and service, the weekend empowers youth to step into leadership roles, develop practical skills, and create lasting memories!

Reach out to the Extension office with any questions or to sign up! Registration is only \$50, thanks to the support of the Indiana 4-H Foundation! Register at <https://2026teenleadershipweekend.4honline.com>

4-H DAY AT THE STATEHOUSE

4-Hers grades 7-12 are invited to visit the Statehouse! Indiana 4-H Day at the Statehouse will be on February 10th. All 4-Hers in grades 7-12 can visit and serve as pages, meet your legislators, learn about Indiana History and more! Registration is open in 4-H, but is closing fast! Please register ASAP if you would like to attend, spots are limited! It is only \$25 to attend, and if you are an active Junior Leader, your registration fee will be covered! <https://4HStatehouse2026.4honline.com>

If you would like to attend, please contact me so I can attempt to organize optional transportation if possible, as I will chaperone if any Cass County 4-Hers plan to attend. Remember, in Indiana, students can get up to six excused absences per school year for 4-H events, provided they are in good academic standing and the absence is pre-approved with documentation from a parent. I can provide a school excuse form if needed if you plan to attend!

CHICKEN EMBRYOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Designed for students from grades two to five, the Chick Embryology Program allows youth to observe the life cycle of a chick, from egg to hatchling, by placing an incubator right in the classroom. Over the course of ~5 days, students watch eggs develop, learn about the science behind incubation and anticipate the remarkable moment when the chicks begin to hatch. High School level opportunities are available upon request, with potential to explore farm to fork pathways and Animal Science lessons.

Incubators and fertilized eggs are provided, along with an optional lesson or classroom materials. The Chick Embryology Program is available in February & March. Incubators are limited, please contact Cass County 4-H Educator Claire King with questions or to schedule a program!

Lessons and activities that are available include learning about basic poultry and egg fun facts, studying the anatomy of an egg by breaking open unfertilized eggs and seeing how they grow into chicks, dying Easter eggs, candling eggs (holding fertilized eggs up to light to see inside them) and more!

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

As we look to the new year, we will be hosting educational, social, and overall improvement events for our community, here are a few more to look forward too.

PURDUE EXTENSION BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Purdue Extension Cass County office will be hosting a Board of Directors meeting on February 4th.

Please call the office to RSVP 574-753-7750

ROYAL CENTER LIBRARY COFFEE GROUP

Tuesday, February 3rd, the Royal Center Coffee group hosted Kailey Dockerty, Cass County CED/HHS educator who taught Meal in a Mug. The Royal Center Coffee Group meets the first Tuesday of each month. For details on upcoming events and speakers, please call the Royal Center library for further details.

Royal Center Library: (574) 643-3185

PARP EVENT FEBRUARY 23RD

Mathias Ingle, ANR Educator for Howard Co., will be hosting a Private Applicator Re-certification Program on February 23rd. Reservations are required. Please call (574-753-7750) to RSVP.

MOCK GROCERY

Private event, call for details.

INDIANA EXTENSION HOMEMAKER DISTRICT MEETING

On April 13th, the Indiana Extension Homemakers district meeting will be held in Fulton County. Please call the Fulton Co. office for details (574) 223-3397.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!

PURDUE EXTENSION - CASS COUNTY

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"GOOD,
BETTER,
BEST.
NEVER LET
IT REST.
'TIL YOUR
GOOD IS
BETTER
AND YOUR
BETTER IS
BEST."

ST. JEROME

