



Kosciusko County
Purdue University Extension

Highlights

Homemakers Newsletter

December 2025 - January 2026

Inside This Issue:

DeeAnna's Deep Dish	1
Mark Your Calendar	2
Quilt for Raffle '26 Fair	2
Did You Know?	2
Deep Dish, Continued	3
Scholarships	4
Teresa Surface Jones	4
Say "I Do" to Leadership	5
Finding Joy in Simple Moments	5
Seeds of Service	6
Donation Items Needed	7
Home Organization Tip	7
IEHA State Board Meeting Highlights	8
IEHA Highlights, Cont.	9
Holiday Program Recap	9
Rural Neighbors on the Road	10
Rural Neighbors, Cont.	11
Winter Wellness Tips	11
Office Closures	12
Holiday Message	12
Homemaker Officers	12
Extension Staff	12

Extension Web Page

www.extension.purdue.edu/county/kosciusko

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Kosciusko County
Indiana Extension
Homemakers

Kosciusko County

Extension Office
202 W Main St
Warsaw, IN 46580
574-372-2340

Hours

Monday thru Friday
8:00am- 4:30pm



Where Growth Begins at Home

This month, as part of our ongoing work with tutoring local students, I made several homemade baked pies for the young adults (they lovingly nicknamed it "Pie Alley"). While the kitchen filled with the familiar warmth of

cinnamon and butter, I found myself pausing to think about *what homemaking truly means*.



Figure 1: DeeAnna's Two-Crust Apple Delish Pie

For many of us, the smell of something homemade represents comfort, stability, and the feeling of being cared for. Yet many children in our community do not always experience those simple gifts of "home." When they tasted those pies, their faces lit up with joy in a way that reminded me: homemaking has never been only about cooking or keeping a tidy space. It is about offering nourishment, belonging, and a sense of being valued.

This is the heart of our theme: **Grow: Mind • Body • Spirit.**

A homemade pie grows the body, yes — but the act of preparing it grows the spirit. The encouragement grows the mind. The time and care behind it grow community.

As Extension Homemakers, we carry a legacy that stretches far beyond recipes. For generations, Homemakers have strengthened families, communities, and one another through thousands of small, meaningful acts of service. We help others grow because someone once helped us grow. And now, even in something as simple as sharing a slice of pie, we bring that legacy to the next generation.



Figure 2 DeeAnna's Cherry Crumble my Heart



This is why our work matters.

This is why your presence matters.

This is why the skills and spirit of Homemakers still change lives.

Continued on page 3

Mark Your Calendar

Highlight Mailers

Friday, January 30, 2026

- 9:00 AM
- Extension Office
- Clunette Crossroads Club

Extension Board Meeting

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

- 9:30AM
- Martin's Upstairs Loft

Upcoming Lessons

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

- 12:00 PM
- Lesson Changed to Charcuteri! Fun!
- Home & Family Arts Building, Fairgrounds

Homemakers Roundtable (President's Council)

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

- 1:15 PM
- Home & Family Arts Building, Fairgrounds

Coming Up:

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

- 12:00 PM
- Lesson: House Plants
- Home & Family Arts Building, Fairgrounds

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

- 12:00 PM
- Lesson: Vegetable Gardening
- Home & Family Arts Building, Fairgrounds

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

- 12:00 PM
- Lesson: Effective Communication
- Home & Family Arts Building, Fairgrounds



Quilt for Raffle at the 2026 Fair



Are you a quilter? We are looking for a quilt top—or a couple of smaller quilted throw tops—to include in the Extension Homemakers Raffle at the Kosciusko County Fair. We are also happy to accept a completed quilt or quilted throw.

If you have an item you would like to donate, please contact Alice at **574-371-5711**.

Submitted by:
Alice Keirn

Did You Know?

Just 30 minutes of conversation with a friend can lower stress, improve mood, and even boost memory. Staying socially connected—whether through a phone call, a cup of coffee, or a quick visit—can make your whole week brighter. A little connection truly goes a long way!



DeeAnna's Deep Dish, continued.

A Season of Transition

Our Extension Educator, Shannon Shepherd, has stepped away from her role. We are grateful for her service and wish her well. Moving forward, our county will be supported by a team of educators:

- Karen Richey (Marshall County)
- Jessica Riffle (Fulton County)
- Brittney Schori (Whitley County)
- Emily Christ (Elkhart County)

We appreciate their willingness to step in and continue providing resources and educational programming. We also want every club to consider: **What do you expect from Purdue Extension? What programs or topics do you hope to see?** Your voice matters, and we want to ensure our partnership meets the needs of our members. Our agreement with Purdue remains in place through July 2026 (when it will be re-evaluated as it is every year), and we are committed to using these next months to strengthen this relationship.

About the bigger picture

With thousands of members across Indiana (over **8,000 active members in 87 counties** in recent reports) we are part of a legacy and network that empowers homemakers — in every sense of the word. You belong to something bigger than our county club.

Growing Our Membership Growth begins with invitation.

I encourage every member to ask: *Who could I bring with me to a meeting?*

Someone at your church... a neighbor... a friend... a newcomer to your community.

We tend to become comfortable with the familiar faces in our clubs, but inviting someone new gives *them* an opportunity to grow — and helps *us* grow as well.

A Big Win: The Online “Blue Book”

A special thank you to our District Governor, **Michelle Blough**, who has worked diligently to move our beloved (and famously heavy) “blue book” online. This transition will make information accessible to every member at any time — a huge step forward for convenience, clarity, and connection.

A Final Slice of Deep Dish

Just like pie, homemaking is meant to be shared.

Whether you are baking, teaching, encouraging, or simply showing up with kindness, you are helping grow minds, bodies, and spirits in ways you may never fully see.

Thank you for being part of this beautiful legacy and helping our community grow. And thank you for being Homemakers — in every sense of the word.

Warmly,

DeeAnna Muraski

County President, Kosciusko Extension Homemakers



Figure 3 DeeAnna's Peach
Brown Sugar Crumble

Scholarships

The Kosciusko Extension Homemakers financially supports three scholarships at \$1,00.00 each. Two scholarships will be awarded each year to college/university students including those seeking a two-year associate degree. One scholarship will be awarded to a Career & Technical program earning certification/licensure in a chosen field. We have offered the scholarship for the Career & Technical program the last three years and have not had any applications for this scholarship. Therefore, if you know any students desiring training in these areas, please encourage them to apply for this scholarship. The application form will be in the President's Packet, and a fillable form is available on the Homemaker's website. The due date is March 16, 2026 and sent to Judy Egolf.



The Indiana Extension Homemakers offers three scholarships and those are available online under the membership tab - forms and in the President's Packet. The Career and Technical scholarship and Ruth B. Sayer scholarship are available to high school students. The Ruth B. Sayer scholarship is available to any student whose state Extension program is a member of the Country Women's Council USA. They award five scholarships a year and in 2025 ALL five scholarships were awarded to residents of Indiana. Way to go Indiana. The Career Advancement scholarship requirements are: 25 years of age or older, a member of a Homemaker program and a resident of Indiana. If you know someone who would meet two of these criteria and is not a member of a Homemakers group encourage them to join Homemaker's club so they could make application.

As a member of a Homemaker's club or a Mailbox member please encourage any high school senior to make application for these scholarships. They are available from the local high schools and online.

Submitted by:
Judy Egolf

Recognizing One of Our Own: Teresa Surface Jones



The Official Board of the Kosciusko County Extension Homemakers would like to congratulate Teresa Surface Jones, a member of the M&M'S Extension Homemakers Club on being chosen as one of the 8 Tippecanoe Valley's Distinguished Alumni Class of 2026.

Teresa, a TVHS graduate from the Class of 1991, has forged a career in journalism, marketing and education. She graduated from Ball State with a degree in political science and a minor in telecommunications. She anchored the highest-rated local morning newscast in the nation and reported stories on CNN.

She then took time off to raise her two daughters and then transitioned to education, developed curriculum and teaching speech and debate and online history courses.

In 2023 she returned to Indiana. Currently she is the director of the Kosciusko County Historical Society, an Extension Homemaker and she and her husband, Peter are getting involved with things going on in Kosciusko County.

Say “I Do!” to Leadership

We are currently looking for a couple people to say “*I do!*” to two important (but very manageable) roles within our county Extension Homemakers family:



County Vice President (President-in-Training!)

This is the perfect step for someone who enjoys organizing and supporting others—and wants to grow into the President role *with help and encouragement along the way!*

Sample duties include:

- Helping plan and lead county meetings
- Attending board meetings (approximately 6 per year)
- Helping with President Council/Homemakers Roundtable meetings
- Learning the ropes from the current Board

Bringing ideas for lessons, speakers, and outreach No experience needed—just a willing spirit and a heart for service!

Fair Director (for 2027 Fair)

If you enjoy fair week and want to help keep it fun and smooth, this role is for you!

Sample duties include:

- Helping coordinate our Extension Homemakers Home & Family Arts building - booth and displays
- Supporting the raffle or featured fair projects
- Working with other members to staff the booth or schedule shifts
- Coordinating judges for each department
- Confirming Department Heads for each category You will have support from past Fair Directors and the board—it is not a one-person job!

If you are interested or even just *thinking about it*, reach out to DeeAnna Muraski. We will answer questions, cheer you on, and be right there with you!

Let’s grow together—with joy, leadership, and laughter.

Submitted by:
DeeAnna Muraski

Finding Joy in the Simple Moments



As life gets busy, it’s easy to overlook the small moments that bring joy—a favorite song on the radio, the warmth of a blanket, or a friendly conversation at the grocery store. Paying attention to these tiny sparks of happiness can brighten your whole day.

Try keeping a short list of “simple joys” on your refrigerator or in a notebook. Each week, add one thing that made you smile. Soon, you’ll be surprised at how many good moments you’ve collected.

These little reminders help shift our focus toward gratitude, even on the coldest winter days. Sometimes the smallest joys make the biggest difference.

Seeds of Service

Volunteering, by definition, is offering, giving, undertaking, and stepping forward to help organizations and people who need support. To volunteer is to give of oneself, to offer our skills and time, and to help strengthen the lives of others and the communities we call home.

I recently learned about another organization called “**I Support Girls.**” They collect donations of gently used or new bras, as well as essential feminine items for girls and women who are low income or survivors in need. There is an office in South Bend, and I am gathering additional information about how our Homemakers might partner with them.

I was also inspired by the work of the **Whitley County Homemakers**, who sew comfort hearts for veterans and individuals facing hardship. Their efforts have raised \$1,000 through cook-book sales, fed more than 400 people with special veteran meals, and provided Homemaker demonstrations that make a meaningful impact in their community.



Another group, “**Sleep in Heavenly Peace,**” recently built several beds for children in North Webster. These are the types of projects that speak to the heart of homemaking and the spirit of our theme: **Grow: Mind • Body • Spirit.**

A Challenge for Each Club

I would love to see each club choose an organization to support this year. You may select one organization to focus on all year, or choose a new one each month. I have included a list of suggested organizations for your consideration. Whatever you choose, please remember to **record your volunteer hours**. There is a space in your Homemaker booklet **each month** for tracking your time.

If your club identifies an organization beyond the ones listed, please let me know. I am always eager to learn about new opportunities for service. I would also be happy to help deliver donated items if needed. If you require assistance, simply call me at **574-268-7378** and I will be glad to help.

Submitted by:
Martha Whetstone
Chair, Volunteer Community Support



Listing For Donations for the Following Organizations

Sleep In Heavenly Peace

- Twin size sheets
- Twin size bedspreads
- Twin size pillows
- Twin size bed in a bag
- Monetary

I Support The Girls

- Gently used bras
- Monthly items
- New underwear
- Socks

Beaman Home

- Good used clothing
- Color books
- Crayons
- Puzzle books
- Deodorant
- Tooth brushes & paste
- Hair products
- Bath items

Fellowship Missions

- Liquid laundry soap
- Kleenex
- Bottled water
- Gatorade
- All kinds of vegetables & meat
- Coffee & filters
- Potatoes & Bread
- Paper plates & cups
- Plastic silverware

Law Enforcement & EMTS

- Stuffed animals, assorted
- Medium sized Teddy Bears

Schools

- Winter hats & gloves/mittens
- Hand wipes
- Foot powder
- Multi vitamins
- Cup of soup
- Magazines
- Liquid insect repellent

Military Packages

- Chewing gum
- Fruit cups
- Eye drops
- Mouthwash
- Toothpaste
- Hair clips
- Dental floss
- Shaving supplies
- Helmet liners
- Chapstick



Home Organization Mini-Tip

January and February are perfect months to tackle small home projects. Instead of overwhelming yourself with big reorganizing goals, choose one small area at a time—a drawer, a shelf, or a single closet. Set a 15-minute timer and sort items into “keep,” “donate,” and “discard.”



As you go, you may discover gently used items you no longer need—linens, kitchenware, books, or extra coats. These can make a big difference to local organizations serving families in our community. A few decluttering sessions not only lighten your home, but also help support those in need.

A little organizing truly goes a long way!

IEHA State Board Meeting Highlights (October 16-17, 2025)

Thought for the Day: *“Every day is a good day, but some days are better.”*



State & Structural Updates

- Lisa Graves, Interim HHS Program Leader and Assistant Director for Purdue Extension, shared updates on the new statewide structure.
- Indiana is moving from a **personnel-based model** to a **service-based model** to ensure long-term sustainability and stronger connections.
- Two statewide “pods” or clusters have been created:
- **Northwest Pod:** Fountain, Benton, Tippecanoe, and Warren Counties
- **East Pod:** Blackford, Henry, Jay, Randolph, and Wayne Counties
- Educators will now serve **across counties**, expanding access to expertise.
- Extension offices will remain open in each county, though not every county will retain a 4-H educator.
- Porter, Starke, and Pulaski Counties will have an HHS educator in their region, with time-lines still unknown.

Business Items

1. Riley Hospital Cheer Guild

Requests donations of:

- Toys, kid band-aids, markers, coloring books
- Colored pencils, Hot Wheels, gift cards
- Cloth envelopes for bereavement pockets

Important: Call ahead before delivering.

2. 2026 Conference Service Project

- Project: Fleece blankets to send overseas.
- Begin collecting now.

3. Blue Book Update

- Expected online by Thanksgiving.
- It will be section-based and easy to navigate.

4. HHS Liaison Report

Diana Stone highlighted three programs:

- Curb the Urge to Splurge (financial literacy)
- Matter of Balance
- Mediterranean Diet (Med) program

5. State Conference Lodging

- The Nashville Seasons Lodge will not open until January 1.
- Members are encouraged to secure alternative lodging early; parking is plentiful.

6. VCS Focus Group

- Counties should set early deadlines to ensure president’s reports are completed by April 1.



IEHA State Board Meeting Highlights, continued

7. Logo Committee

Reviewing new items, including:

- Yard signs
- A possible vehicle decal
- New merchandise (fleece vests, fun socks, pen, sun visor)
- All ideas are still being researched.

8. Cultural Arts 2027

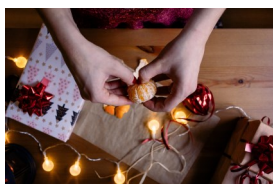
- Special project: Jewelry
- Must fit in a 12×12×12 display case
- Any medium allowed
- Entrants may submit a set if all pieces match
- Entry forms must be submitted online before arriving at conference

9. Craft Swap Idea

- Idea from the Lafayette District:
 - Members donate items for two days
 - Each donation earns a ticket
 - On Day 3, participants “shop” using their tickets
 - Days 4 & 5 are open to the public
- A creative fundraiser and community engagement activity.

Submitted by:
DeeAnna Muraski

Holiday Program Recap



November 5 found the Kosciusko County Extension Homemaker ladies and guests at the Home and Family Arts building enjoying this year's Holiday Program themed, "Wrapping up the Holidays". Amy Rumschlag, 4-H Educator, our presenter for the day, showed us how to wrap up our gifts in unique and fun ways.

We also learned that when some people buy gifts, they use the rule of thumb: Something they **need**, something they **want**, something to **wear** and something to **read**. Amy showed a very clever way of wrapping these items up in 3 boxes in white papers, stacked them on top of each other, added eyes, carrot nose, mouth, scarf and a sock hat to make a cute snowman.

We enjoyed morning refreshments furnished by the Tippecanoe Township and a warm lunch by Chit Chat with the Atwood Home Study helping with providing drinks.

After lunch, we jumped into crafting mode and found our way to the project tables. From cozy recycled sweater trees to cute no-sew gift bags and adorable set of three ornaments, the room was filled with creativity and holiday cheer! A great day was had by all and hopefully a good start to the upcoming Holiday Season.

Submitted by:
Marvene Johnson

Rural Neighbors on the Road!

A Day Trip to the Blue Gate Theater

Our Rural Neighbors club enjoyed a wonderful outing recently as we took "Rural Neighbors on the Road!" to Shipshewana for the 1:00 p.m. matinee of The Christmas Candy Caper at the Blue Gate Theater. This production was held in the smaller downtown theater—not to be confused with the larger venue by the Blue Gate Inn—so it had a cozy, intimate feel that made the performance even more enjoyable.

We carpooled together and enjoyed a beautiful drive. The GPS routed us along scenic backroads, which turned the 45–50 minute trip into a peaceful, relaxed start to our day. To make it even better, we were gifted with what became our last 65-degree day of the year—a perfect send-off to fall.



A Musical Full of Heart (and Candy!)

Going into the show, we were not quite sure what to expect. However, we were soon drawn into the lively storyline of a cheerful candy-shop owner and her extremely shy suitor (too shy to suitor!). The main character loves playing pranks on her neighbors, but when she finds herself in real danger and no one initially responds, she comes to realize that her pranks have not been kind—or funny. What she also discovers is that the community truly does care for her and had her best interests at heart all along.



We were especially impressed by the vocal talent of the cast and how seamlessly the music wove into the storyline. The performance concluded with several beautiful religious songs, all of which fit the tone and message of the play perfectly. It was clean, uplifting, and genuinely fun for everyone.

Dining After the Show — A Good Choice!

Our group decided ahead of time to go out to eat after the 60-minute play rather than trying to squeeze in a meal beforehand.



That turned out to be the best decision! The restaurant was not crowded at all, and we received wonderful service and delicious food without any rush.



When we stepped back outside, we could see Blue Gate crews adding the finishing touches to their famous miles-long Christmas light display, which will soon be lighting up the entire area.

Best of all — we were able to make the full trip and return before dark, which everyone appreciated.



Rural Neighbors on the Road!, continued

A Day Well Spent

It was truly a delightful day filled with fellowship, laughter, music, and memorable moments. And personally, I could not have asked for a better way to spend my very first vacation day of the year!



Attendees Featured in Photos: Martha Whetstone, Diana Slaymaker, Carol Droke, Mr. Droke, Jack Camden, MaryBeth Camden, Julia Frush, (*Not pictured: DeeAnna Muraski*)

Submitted by:
DeeAnna Muraski
Secretary, Rural Neighbors



Winter Wellness Tips



Winter often nudges us indoors, but a few simple habits can help you stay healthy and energized all season long.

Stay hydrated.

Cold weather can dry you out without you realizing it. Keep a water bottle nearby or sip on caffeine-free herbal teas.

Move a little each day.

A short walk, light stretching, or a quick indoor routine can boost your mood and fight winter sluggishness.

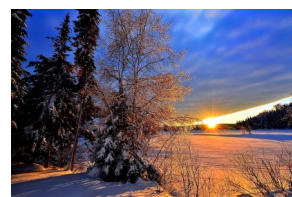
Support your immune system.

Add bright, nutrient-rich foods—like citrus, carrots, peppers, beans, and raw spinach—to meals and snacks.

Protect your emotional well-being.

Open the blinds, get outside when you can, and jot down one thing you're grateful for. Small moments of light make a big difference.

Winter may be chilly, but these tiny habits can help you feel your best all season long.



Extension Office Closures

The Extension Office will be closed the following dates:



For Christmas Break

- Wednesday, December 24, 2025
- Thursday, December 25, 2025
- Friday, December 26, 2025



For New Year's Day Break

- Thursday, January 1, 2026
- Friday, January 2, 2026

A Holiday Message from the Extension Office

As we wrap up another year, we want to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all of our Kosciusko County Extension Homemakers. Your dedication, kindness, and service continue to strengthen our community in so many meaningful ways.

From all of us at the Extension Office, we wish you a very **Merry Christmas** and a joyful, peaceful **New Year**. May your holidays be filled with warmth, good health, and special moments with the people you love.

Thank you for all you do, and we look forward to another wonderful year together in 2026!

2024-2025 Kosciusko County Extension Homemakers Officers

COUNTY EXTENSION HOMEMAKER OFFICERS 2025 - 2026			
TITLE	ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL
President			
DeeAnna Muraski	4431 E. 600 S Warsaw, IN 46580	574-527-0065	deeanna@operationreadusa.org
Vice-President			
Vacant	Volunteering helps you grow! We need YOU!		
Secretary			
Marsha Miller	9120 W 125 N Etna Green IN 46524	574-858-2104 574-265-6562	marshamiller65@gmail.com
Treasurer			
Cathi Zdenek	2310 S Southwood Dr Warsaw IN 46580	574-527-3785	cczindrich@gmail.com
Assistant Treasurer			
Vacant	Volunteering helps you grow! We need YOU!		
Past President			
Judy Egolf	3613 W Old Rd 30 Warsaw IN 46580	574-267-2226 574-551-5226	egolfjudy@gmail.com



PURDUE
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Extension

County Extension Staff

Emily Kresca

- Agriculture & Natural Resource Educator
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Amy Rumschlag

- 4-H Youth Development Educator
- County Extension Director
- amyjohnson@purdue.edu

Tami Graff

- 4-H Administrative Assistant
- Office Manager
- graff8@purdue.edu

Devin Boggs

- Extension Program Assistant
- boggdj01@purdue.edu

Position Open

- ANR/HHS Administrative Assistant



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