EXTENSION ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 2024—SEPTEMBER 2025

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

THROUGH PURDUE EXTENSION

Purdue Extension-Lawrence County
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PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Extension - Lawrence County

Find out more about Purdue Extension-Lawrence County's current and upcoming programs by visiting their website or by scanning the QR code.

www.extension.purdue.edu/lawrence

MEET THE STAFF

PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Extension - Lawrence County

Lesley Lodmell
4-H Youth Development Educator, CED

Kassi Shelton
Ag & Natural Resources Program Assistant

Rebecca Payne
Health & Human Sciences Educator

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Nutrition Education Program Advisor

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Program Assistant/Clerical Support

EXTENSION BY THE NUMBERS

35,435+
Total Minutes of education provided to youth and adults within the community

301+
Educational Programming sessions held from Oct. 2024–Sept. 2025

11,903+ **Total Number** of in-person & virtual education participants

142,291+ **Social Media** reach from Oct. 2024 – Sept. 2025

28 **Eat Smart, Move More** lessons held Oct. 2024 –Sept. 2025

204 **Contacts made** during ESMM lessons

100 **Coordinated Approach to Child Health** lessons held Oct. 2024 –Sept. 2025

1,728 **Contacts made** at CATCH lessons

Nutrition Education Program Data provided for Oct. 2024-Sept. 2025

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*Numbers illustrated here are combined from educational efforts for all program areas from Oct. 2024-Sept. 2025.

Purdue University is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institution.

MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

Purdue Extension–Lawrence County strives to reach community members where they are. Sometimes, that is in-person, but we use many different channels including continuing to expand reach and impact through media engagement, benefiting the community with timely, research-based education and program updates. Our staff are featured on WBIW's *Talk of the Town* where they share valuable insights on topics such as healthy living, agricultural advancements, youth development, and community resources.

Along with radio outreach, our social media presence remains an avenue of community communication. Regular posts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram include research-backed tips on nutrition, mental health, and sustainable practices, alongside updates about workshops, volunteer opportunities, and 4-H programs. This digital engagement ensures that residents stay informed and have access to Purdue Extension resources anytime, anywhere.

By leveraging traditional and digital media, we foster community awareness and empower residents with knowledge.

"(...)We have been very grateful to work with Purdue Extension-Lawrence County, featuring them monthly on the program. Each time they join us, they bring a wealth of practical knowledge and topics to our listeners that are relevant to all ages and demographics year-round."

Jeff Wagoner, WBIW,WQRK, WPHZ

COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Growing Together

The Lawrence County *Growing Together* project continued its community impact in 2025 at Bedford Garden Park, a collaborative site established in 2017 by the City of Bedford Parks Department and Purdue Extension. The Land of Limestone Master Gardeners (LLMG) and the Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) partnered again this year to expand and improve the garden.

With grant support, the team installed new metal raised beds inside the hoop house to increase accessibility and productivity. The garden produced 491 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, which were donated to Supporting People in Need (SPIN), LIFE Food Pantry, and Becky's Place. These efforts reached an estimated 730 community members with fresh, nutritious food throughout the growing season.

Nutrition education was provided at Becky's Place and SPIN, reaching ten individuals through direct and indirect learning. Although classes at SPIN were discontinued due to the transient nature of participants, produce donations there continued regularly.

The project was supported by two Master Gardener volunteers and four additional community volunteers, contributing six volunteer hours and leveraging $818.01 in additional funding.

The greatest success of the 2025 season was the expansion of partnerships—particularly with SPIN, which serves the unhoused population—and the strengthened collaboration among all partners. Looking ahead, partners plan to continue produce tracking through September 2025 and sustain the garden's role as a vital source of food and education for Lawrence County residents.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

Learn, Grow, Eat, Go!

This summer, the Health and Human Sciences (HHS) educator and Nutrition Education Program Advisor (NEPA) visited the Limestone Boys and Girls Club. They taught a four-week program using the *Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go* curriculum. This hands-on curriculum is designed to combine elements of nutrition, garden science, food preparation, and fresh vegetable tastings to increase healthy habits among youth and families.

During these four weeks, students focused on learning what plants need to grow, identifying plant parts, planning a garden, and determining the best areas for garden locations. Students were given opportunities to sample various fruits and vegetables while comparing the flavors and textures of their samples. Students also learn fun and interactive physical activity games that can be easily adapted for play at home. *Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go* provides the foundation and education for gardening in practical and attainable ways for youth and families. Using this model to combine elements of nutrition, garden science, fresh vegetable tastings, and physical activity can inspire youth and families to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

"The Learn, Grow, Eat, Go! program through Purdue Extension has been a wonderful addition to our programming at the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence County. This partnership has given our club members the opportunity to explore healthy food options and learn the basics of gardening and growing their own food. Each week, the lessons they receive are not only engaging and educational but also provide skills they can take home and continue to practice. (...) We are grateful for the opportunity to work with Purdue Extension. Their support and resources have been a great asset to our Club, helping us further our mission to promote the overall well-being of the youth we serve."

Kristiane Baumgart-Program Director/Marketing Assistant
Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence County

Eat Smart, Move More

Purdue Extension's Nutrition Education Program (NEP), supported by the Hoosier Uplands Glick Grant, partnered with Hoosier Uplands, Lost River Market & Deli, and Cambridge Square Apartments to offer monthly nutrition lessons. Using the *Eat Smart, Move More* curriculum, 20 senior residents learned healthy eating and cooking for one or two, with demonstrations, tastings, and meal kits. New sessions engaged 19 residents in quick, nutritious meals. At the Hope Resource Center, 22 participants—mostly pregnant mothers—learned about healthy eating during pregnancy.

CATCH

Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program completed its school year in May, reaching 378 students—including 3rd graders at Needmore Elementary and Lawrence County Intermediate School (LCIS) and 5th graders at Burris Elementary.

CATCH provided 21 interactive lessons on nutrition, physical activity, and wellness, helping students make small lifestyle changes, such as eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking water, reading nutrition labels, and staying active. While many schools offer physical education, formal health education is limited, making CATCH a valuable supplement.

The program's impact extended beyond the classroom, with students sharing lessons at home and reflecting through thank-you notes to the NEPA about positive health habits they adopted.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Investing in Youth from the Start: 4-H Mini Day Camp Program

The Lawrence County 4-H Mini Day Camp, now in its fourth year, is a strategic investment in youth development that benefits both our youngest members and our teen leaders. This two day-long camp introduced 32 mini 4-Hers to hands-on learning rooted in the 4-H mission areas of science, healthy living, and civic engagement.

The camp also serves as a leadership development opportunity for older 4-H members. This year, 16 trained teen counselors led sessions, mentored younger youth, and gained valuable skills in communication, responsibility, and teamwork. We are fostering lasting connections that support long-term engagement and success in the program.

Cultivating Careers: 4-H CDEs Grow Skills and Confidence

Each year, the 4-H Educator plays a key role in coordinating 14 Career Development Events (CDEs) in partnership with a team of educators across nine-counties. These events offer youth hands-on opportunities to explore potential career paths but also develop critical skills and confidence, strengthen leadership and public speaking skills, and practice real-world decision-making.

Lawrence County 4-H has seen increased participation, and the BNL FFA chapter continues to be a strong and active partner.

4-H Members Lead Service Learning Initiatives

Service to the community is a major cornerstone of 4-H and its values. This fall, Lawrence County 4-H members showcased their commitment to making a positive impact in our community through a variety of service-learning projects. Youth participated in the annual Trick or Treat for Canned Goods, collecting nearly 300 non-perishable food items to support families facing food insecurity.

More than five clubs helped members bring joy to children and families by volunteering at multiple safe trick-or-treat events. 4-H Junior Leaders embraced creativity and community connection by painting and distributing kindness rocks throughout public spaces.

As the holidays approached, 4-H youth extended their giving spirit by supporting holiday angel tree programs, collecting and distributing gifts to children in need. Additionally, the 4-H Council spearheaded a collection effort to supply filled stockings to people in need, 63 stockings were filled.

Our 4-H members not only developed valuable leadership and teamwork skills but also strengthened their ties to the community.

2024–2025 Lawrence County 4–H program

1,129+ Number of youth positively impacted by the Lawrence County 4–H program

133 Approved Volunteers

21 Active 4–H Junior Leaders

182 Youth attended camps, conferences, workshops, and leadership development opportunities throughout the year

1 Lawrence County 4–H member received an Indiana 4–H State Scholarship

1 Lawrence County 4–H member attended National 4–H Conference in Washington, DC

HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

Be Heart Smart Program

This fall, the Health & Human Sciences Educator successfully delivered one of Extension's signature programs called *Be Heart Smart*.

The main goal of the *Be Heart Smart* Program is to reduce chronic disease risk factors, specifically heart disease, in adults (18 years and older) in Indiana. Throughout the four lessons, participants learned about heart disease risk factors and how to manage them, important health numbers to consider, including blood pressure, weight and cholesterol, facts about heart healthy foods and how to take action to lower risk factors. Each session included a sampling of a heart healthy dish. The program utilized meal kits and small kitchen appliance prizes as participation incentives. An important collaboration was the partnership with Lost River Co-Op and Market, which supplied fresh meal kits that allowed participants to make the heart-healthy dishes discussed in class. The Lawrence County Health Department was another key community partner. They generously helped promote the program and provided a county nurse to do blood pressure screenings at one of the classes.

The following feedback underscores the positive experience reported by participants:

- ***"Enjoyed the info-sharing from group, being able to learn from others, tasting of healthy food, the food that we got to take home and the nightly prizes were so awesome!"***
- ***"Very enjoyable!"***
- ***"The material was well-presented. Questions and discussion were encouraged. The food prepared prior to class and served was good and appreciated."***

Based on participant feedback and lessons learned, Purdue Extension Lawrence County is planning to offer the *Be Heart Smart* program in Mitchell sometime in the new year.

Boosting Financial Skills Across Lawrence County

During January and February, basic financial education sessions were delivered to participants in the Men's Warming Shelter: *Pathways to Progress* program. These individuals, actively preparing to enter or re-enter the workforce, received instruction focused on the fundamentals of managing their money. Key lessons included mastering the basics of budgeting, learning to effectively distinguish needs from wants, and developing strategies for prioritizing income to build a stable financial future as they secure employment.

In addition to serving the shelter program, our financial education outreach expanded to a local home health care organization in Mitchell. In an effort to provide financial education to their staff, Extension delivered a specialized *Where Does Your Money Go?* class. This program was specifically designed to increase employees' overall financial literacy and enhance their budgeting knowledge, helping them better manage their personal finances. These initiatives collectively supported over 60 participants across the two months, providing essential tools for economic stability and career readiness.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture in After School

Purdue Extension-Lawrence County's Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program assistant helped bring agriculture lessons into the Hoosier Uplands After School programs at Burris and Hatfield Elementary schools. These lessons were paired with social and emotional learning provided by Health and Human Sciences (HHS) educator. The programs are planned monthly to present to two groups of students, kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth graders. Each group had an average of 25-32 students. The students learned about bees and the importance of pollinators.

The younger students were able to complete a pollination simulation activity where they acted as bees to transfer pollen from flowers to those with no pollen. This was especially exciting for the K-2 students as they got to play around in "pollen" powder. The older students were hands-on during a game with a pollinator in the middle, and students labeled fruits, vegetables, trees, and flowers. They exchanged pollen with the pollinator and were timed to see how many different types of plants the pollinator could pollinate. Different scenarios were experimented; if there were no pollinators, or if there were multiple pollinators working. More upcoming lessons will incorporate topics such as apples, gratitude for farmers, wildlife hibernation, and stewardship of natural resources.

58 Number of producers within the county who are members of the Lawrence County Cattleman's Association

Third Grade Ag Day

On April 16, Purdue Extension–Lawrence County hosted the annual Third Grade Ag Day, engaging 476 students from ten local schools. The event featured morning and afternoon sessions, each with 12 interactive stations that provided hands-on learning in topics such as pollination and beekeeping, livestock, forestry, soil and water conservation, drones in agriculture, and veterinary science. Students gained a deeper understanding of agriculture's role in daily life and explored related career opportunities.

This event was made possible through the support of more than 60 volunteers, presenters, and sponsors, including ApplAcres, RTC, Farm Credit Mid-America, Lawrence County Farm Bureau, the Lawrence County Fairgrounds, and Walmart, as well as assistance from Lawrence County 4-H and the BNL Career Center and FFA program.

New this year, an additional Ag Day was held in the fall, bringing total youth engagement to nearly 1,000 students.

"Honestly I'm not sure what I'd improve! It was very well organized, informative, visual and tactile! Truly impressive!"

"We really appreciate this great learning experience for our students and look forward to it every year."

Teacher reflection survey feedback from April's Third Grade Ag Day

20+ Active Land of Limestone Master Gardener members

341 Collectively, active LOLMG earn a total of Volunteer hours this program year

LOLMGs earn a total, for continuing educational hours this program year **54**

1,074 lb of produce was donated from the community garden to L.I.F.E. Food Pantry and Becky's Place