

ALLEN EXPRESS

Last month, Purdue Extension – Allen County highlighted a year of impactful community engagement, education, and innovation. We continued our mission of delivering practical, research-based education through traditional programs like 4-H, Master Gardener, and Extension Homemakers, while expanding outreach to underserved audiences.

Volunteers contributed over 14,793 hours, supporting programs that reached more than 11,600 participants through more than 850 educational sessions and 365 nutrition programs. Youth engagement was strong, with more than 5,500 young learners involved. Extension also helped home owners with nearly 300 diagnostic samples for plants, insects, and soil.

A standout initiative was the Emmanuel Christian Afterschool 4-H Club, which offered 46 students hands-on learning in science, art, cooking, and gardening, culminating in a showcase of their projects. Johnnie Mae Farm produced over 11,500 vegetable servings and launched the Plant, Pick, Plate program, funded by a \$250,000 grant, to teach middle schoolers food cultivation and cooking. We also welcomed new staff as Caroline Everidge, Health and Human Sciences, Cheyanne Geideman, Community Development, and Erin McBain, Administrative Assistant, joined our office team.

Additional programs included the Mock Grocery Store Challenge promoting healthy budgeting and nutrition, JCAP gardening sessions at the Allen County Jail fostering personal growth, and the Fort Wayne Farm Show, which educated farmers on pesticide safety and agricultural best practices.

Purdue Extension - Allen County continues to be a vibrant, evolving extension service deeply rooted in community support and lifelong learning.

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

NEW OFFICE HOURS AT JOHNNIE MAE FARM

Join us as we highlight the amazing things our staff and volunteers have accomplished during the last year. More information on page 6.

4-H ENROLLMENT KICKOFF

Enrollment for 4-H members and volunteers begins on Oct. 1. Don't wait to enroll and gain access to exciting youth programs we offer.

JOHNNIE MAE FARM MARKETS

Johnnie Mae Farm will continue to operate its market on Fridays from 2-6 pm. Come see what we have to offer.



FALL HIGHLIGHTS

GROWING HEALTHY PRODUCE FOR THE COMMUNITY

At Johnnie Mae Farm, the summer of 2025 was a season of abundance and impact. Each week, our farmer, Cameron Ruhl, harvested vibrant vegetables, including collard greens, squash, tomatoes, and greens. The harvest so far this year totals over 2,500 pounds and yields more than 28,000 servings for the community. The Friday markets buzz with energy as produce is sorted, shared, and sold.

The last three months were busy as more than 2,450 pounds were harvested, with 1,635 pounds sold and 793 pounds donated to families in need. Collard greens (741 lbs.), summer squash (441 lb.s), and red tomatoes (285 lbs.) led the charge, filling baskets and bellies alike.

Every harvest told a story of growth and generosity. From the soil to the table, the farm became a beacon of nourishment and hope. With each pound picked and every serving shared, Johnnie Mae Farm proved that a small urban plot could make a big difference. It isn't just farming—it is community in full bloom.

Johnnie Mae Farm will continue to host markets on Fridays from 2-6 p.m. We hope to continue until mid-November as long as the weather cooperates.



ALLEN COUNTY

4-H Enrollment Kick-Off

Learn how your family can get involved in a year full of fun, friendship, and growth with 4-H!

Sunday, October 12th, 1-3 PM

Allen County Extension Office

4001 Crescent Ave, Fort Wayne, IN

- Enroll both youth and volunteers same day!
- Meet the Club Leaders
- Explore a variety of 4-H projects
- Enjoy food, games, and meet some animals!



RSVP
bit.ly/3HGxBhq



OCTOBER EVENTS

01

4-H ENROLLMENT BEGINS

4-H enrollment is open for the 2025-2026 program year! Sign up as soon as possible to make the most of your 4-H year.

04

HEALTH FAIR AT JOHNNIE MAE FARM

Join us Saturday, Oct. 4 from 9-11 a.m. at Johnnie Mae Farm for a family-friendly Fall Health Fair with activities, refreshments, and community resources.

09

PLANT-BASED DIETS

Learn about different types of plant-based diets, their benefits, and considerations in a lesson with Abigail Creigh, Noble County Extension Educator.

12

4-H ENROLLMENT KICKOFF

Learn how your family can get involved in a year full of fun, friendship, and growth with 4-H!

Full calendar at:
puext.in/allen

Purdue University is an Equal Opportunity/Equal Access University. For special dietary needs contact Rebecca Doehrmann at rcdlay@purdue.edu by Sept. 6.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

James Wolff
allences@purdue.edu



OPEN ENROLLMENT BEGINS OCT. 1!

Are you ready to learn, lead, and make lifelong friendships? Starting **Oct. 1**, youth in grades K-12 can enroll in 4-H, a nationwide organization that empowers youth through hands-on learning experiences. Whether you're passionate about animals, science, art, or leadership, 4-H offers something for everyone. Members can explore new hobbies, build public speaking skills, boost their confidence, and prepare for a successful future—all while being part of a supportive community. More information about 4-H is at puext.in/allen4H. Don't miss out—sign up today at 4-H Online and start your journey with 4-H!



LOOKING TO VOLUNTEER?

The open enrollment season isn't just for our youth members, it's also for our adult volunteers. Early enrollment means you will stay in the loop on all 4-H activities. If you have questions about volunteering, email allences@purdue.edu, call 260-481-6826, or visit puext.in/allen4H

New Volunteers:

We welcome new volunteers! If you haven't used our 4-H Online system before, log-in and register to be a volunteer at <https://v2.4honline.com>. Make sure to select that you are new volunteer to help us process things correctly.

Returning Volunteers:

Welcome back for another year! Please go into 4-H Online as you have in previous years and let us know you want to continue volunteering. There will be a short training video and you can select your level of involvement. This annual process helps us make sure we can provide the safest learning environment to your youth.



4-H BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED

As we near the end of another year, the Allen County 4-H Board is looking for new members to kick-off a new year. Allen County 4-H Clubs, Inc. and its board serve to guide the activities of the Allen County 4-H Program and raise funds to enhance the 4-H experience for our youth. Board members are elected annually at the 4-H Board Annual Meeting (Dec. 2) and serve a 3-year term. Board members can serve a second term for a total of 6 consecutive years. If you wish to serve on the Allen County 4-H Board, contact our office at allences@purdue.edu or visit puext.in/allen4H for a board application. Applications must be received by Nov. 11 and your annual volunteer enrollment completed in order to be placed on the election ballot.



A FOND FAREWELL

Please join us in thanking Rebecca Doerhman, 4-H Youth Development Educator, for her service at Purdue Extension and her contributions to 4-H. In her 3 years with Purdue Extension, she brought much excitement to our youth programs and helped establish several new activities. Rebecca has been an important part in supporting youth development, leadership, and community engagement. Her last day with Extension is Friday, Oct. 3. We wish her the very best in her next chapter!

CONTACT US

4-H questions can be directed to our support staff at allences@purdue.edu or 260-481-6826. James Wolff, County Extension Director, will oversee 4-H policy and procedures in the interim.



ROOTED & RESILIENT

HOMESTEADING CONFERENCE

We are so excited to invite you to the second annual Rooted & Resilient Homesteading Conference in Noble County! The conference takes place on Friday, November 7 and Saturday, November 8 with a variety of sessions for both adults and youth.

There are many topics from gardening to livestock to first aid and much more (and even a couple of our own Master Gardeners speaking!)

More information and the registration link can be found here: [Rooted & Resilient Homesteading Conference](#) and you can always reach out to me at hill272@purdue.edu or call the office at 260-481-6826 with any questions.

PLANT SPRING-FLOWERING BULBS

NOW IS THE TIME!

Fall may feel like the end of the growing season, but it's actually the beginning of something beautiful.

Late September through mid-October is typically the perfect time to plant many spring-flowering bulbs like tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, crocus, alliums, and more, giving them enough time to root before the ground freezes.

These bulbs require a period of cold dormancy in order to bloom, so timing is important.

For best results, plant before the first hard frost, but wait until nighttime temperatures consistently drop to 40–50 degrees.

Planting too early can cause bulbs

to bloom in the fall or rot in the soil.

Bulbs should be planted at a depth of about two to three times their height—for example, a 2-inch bulb should be placed 4 to 6 inches deep—with the pointy side facing up and the root side down.

Adding a light application of bulb fertilizer or compost at planting time helps provide nutrients, and bulbs should be thoroughly watered right after planting.

To protect your investment from squirrels and other critters, consider placing chicken wire over the planting area or choose pest-resistant options such as daffodils and alliums.

With these simple steps, you'll be

rewarded in the spring with vibrant color and the satisfaction of having planned ahead.

For more information about Indiana bulbs, see publication [HO-086.PM](#).

Bonus tip: bulbs can also be planted in pots now and chilled in an unheated garage to enjoy early spring blooms indoors!



HARVEST '25 SHAPING UP TO HAVE PLENTY OF FIRE RISKS

By: Ed Sheldon & Bill Field,
Purdue Ag. Safety & Health
Program

It's already dry, with most of the state reporting abnormally dry or moderate drought conditions. The extended weather forecast shows hot and dry for at least the next couple weeks. While combine fires are always a risk during harvest season, in conditions like this it is almost inevitable that we'll see more than average. As Harvest '25 ramps up, we greatly appreciate your efforts to remind farmers in your communities about the importance of safety in general during this busy season,

and in particular, the hazards of combine and field fires.

We have just updated and re-released an article about equipment maintenance practices that can help prevent combine fires from occurring. Please feel free to use this article in your newsletters, news releases, etc. Change or add to it as appropriate for your needs. Click on the image or link below to access the article:

<https://www.purdue.edu/engineering/ABE/INPREPared/hot-dry-harvests-lead-to-combine-fires-take-preventive-steps-now/>



PESTICIDE APPLICATORS

COMMERCIAL CREDITS

Purdue Extension is hosting a series of Commercial Pesticide Applicator Workshops across the state from November 2025 through January 2026.

This is a great opportunity to gain continuing education credits for multiple commercial pesticide applicator categories. The program will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at each location.

This event will be hosted at Purdue Fort Wayne on Nov. 19.

Registration is \$80 and includes lunch. Most commercial categories will earn 5-6 credits.

If you want to register for the class, visit: <https://cvent.me/nErnyY>. Check our event website at bit.ly/cpaw2526 for more information and coming registration link.

FALL DROUGHT STATUS

Allen County is currently in D2 and D3 drought status as reported by the U.S. Drought Monitor map released on Oct. 2, 2025.

A D2 drought (Severe Drought) means agricultural conditions are severely stressed, with reduced soil moisture and likely crop or pasture losses. Water levels in ponds and streams are also low.

Southeast portions of Allen County are also experiencing D3 Drought (Extreme Drought). This can lead to severe crop losses. Trees and shrubs may also be showing significant stress from dry soil conditions. This level of drought extends into northern Adams County and western Ohio.

You can track our drought status and find more information at droughtmonitor.unl.edu. Drought Resources page available at www.inprepared.org

FARMLAND VALUES

AND CASH RENTAL RATES (2026)

The Purdue Farmland Value and Cash Rent Survey is conducted each June. The survey respondents are knowledgeable of Indiana's farmland market and include farm managers, rural appraisers, farmland brokers, agricultural loan officers, farmers, and Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office directors.

These professionals provide an estimate of the market value for bare poor, average, and top quality farmland in the prior December, June of the current year, and a forecast for the upcoming December. To assess productivity of the farmland, respondents provide an estimate of long-term corn yield for top, average, and poor productivity farmland. Respondents also provide a market value estimate for land transitioning out of agriculture and for recreational land. Full report from the Center for Commercial Agriculture at: <https://ag.purdue.edu/commercialag/home/farmland-values/>



HAPPY HANDS ART CLUB

A CREATIVE, SENSORY-FRIENDLY SPACE FOR KIDS

This fall, Johnnie Mae Farm hosted its first Happy Hands Art Club, and the room was alive with color and creativity! Elementary-aged children explored paints, clay, and textured crafts in a calm, supportive space designed especially for kids with autism or sensory processing differences. Parents shared how much they valued the welcoming environment, while kids left proud of their artwork and excited for the next session.

We're keeping the creativity going this winter! Join us for winter-themed art Happy Hands sessions on December 1, 8, and 15 at 5:00 PM at Johnnie Mae Farm. Every child is an artist—and Happy Hands is their place to shine.

Register here: <https://forms.gle/ZzDh9yX7nVGZyTev7>



HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES TO HALLOWEEN CANDY

DELICIOUS OPTIONS FOR A HEALTHIER HALLOWEEN

Halloween fun doesn't have to mean sugar overload! If you'd like to offer healthier treats this year, try some of these kid-approved alternatives:

- **Mini packs of pretzels, popcorn, or trail mix**
- **Fruit snacks made with real fruit**
- **Applesauce or yogurt squeeze pouches**
- **Cheese sticks or cracker packs**
- **100% fruit juice boxes**

Non-food treats are another great option—think stickers, glow sticks, pencils, bubbles, or small toys. Kids still get the thrill of a surprise, without the sugar crash. With a little creativity, you can make Halloween both fun and healthy!



NEW AT JOHNNIE MAE FARM: COMMUNITY HOURS

STOP BY AND SAY HI!

Starting in October, Johnnie Mae Farm will host Community Hours every Wednesday from 2:30–4:30 PM. This is a chance to stop by, connect with Purdue Extension staff, ask questions, or simply enjoy the welcoming space of the farm. Mark your calendar for a special fall gathering on **Wednesday, October 29**—we'll have mini pumpkin painting, coffee, and cookies for all who stop in!

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Cheyenne Geideman
cgeidema@purdue.edu



This winter, Purdue Extension - Allen County is offering Digital Skills Lessons (DSL), a series of one-hour workshops covering introductory technology topics at the Allen County Public Library. These sessions will be held at several library branches and are designed to help community members build confidence with digital tools. Each workshop has its own event page and registration link, which can be found by browsing the full schedule here If you are interested: <http://bit.ly/46yE07X> If you are interested in being notified about future DSL workshops, you can sign up at <http://bit.ly/48feGoW> or call the Allen County Purdue Extension office at: 260-481-6826.

TECH TIPS

Struggling with your WiFi signal? Make sure your router/modem is set up in a central location to ensure the signal is evenly distributed. If a central location isn't feasible, you may benefit from wifi extenders or mesh systems to reach the areas you experience weak signal. Remember, some devices perform better hardwired into a connection so also take that into consideration.

Want to learn more about getting the most from your WiFi and help your family and friends do the same? Consider signing up to be a Digital Ambassador. Digital Ambassadors receive training on a variety of tech topics so they can be the go-to person people turn to. Sign up to be notified when classes are available near you: <http://bit.ly/4nTxUEQ>



APPLE CRUNCH

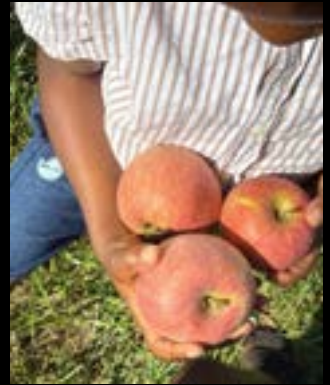
The Great Apple Crunch 2025 invites Hoosiers of all ages to celebrate healthy eating and support local agriculture by biting into crisp, locally grown apples throughout October.

Participants—including schools, childcare centers, businesses, and community groups—can crunch in creative ways, from one-time bites to week-long events. The initiative aims to engage all 92 Indiana counties, surpassing last year's 86-county participation. The Crunch promotes farm-to-table awareness and agricultural careers while strengthening local food systems.

A "Let's Get Started Toolkit" offers recipes, activities, and lessons to enhance the experience. Participants are encouraged to share their crunch moments on social media using #IndianaAppleCrunch.

Registration is open all month, with posters and stickers available while supplies last. For orchard connections or toolkit access, contact designated coordinators. Let's make this year's Crunch a loud, juicy celebration across the state.

More information at: <https://www.ingrown4schools.com/indiana-great-apple-crunch>



PURDUE EXTENSION - ALLEN COUNTY

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