



Will County
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April 25, 2017

Subject: FY18 Budget Request of \$50,000 for University of Illinois Extension, Will County

University of Illinois Extension, Will County, is grateful for the generous donation of \$30,000 for FY17 from the Will County Board. We look forward to your continued support. Extension is an outreach of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana providing research-based information and programs to the residents of Will County.

July 1, 2011, marked the beginning of the reorganization of Extension into multi-county units. Grundy, Kankakee and Will Counties share a director and four subject matter educators: 4-H Youth Development; Nutrition and Wellness; Consumer and Family Economics; and Local Foods/Small Farms. Because of the population and needs of Will County, University of Illinois Extension has made it possible for two additional educators in our unit: Metro 4-H Youth Development and SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program– Education). Both are housed in the Will County Extension Office with most of their educational efforts in Will County. Their salaries are paid by State and Federal funds.

With the configuration of Extension, County directors and educators are shared but each county in our multi-county unit maintain an office and support staff as local fundraising from within the county provides. Will County Extension has a full-time secretary, a full-time Extension Program Coordinator for horticulture and part-time 4-H staff. These staff manage and coordinate opportunities of service and education for nearly 200 Will County Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists and 4-H volunteers.

Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists are trained volunteers that give back to their communities by “teaching others to grow” and answering home horticulture questions. They worked with 2200 youth and several special needs groups teaching about growing food and protecting the environment. In 2016 the Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists contributed 7000 hours and had over 10,000 contacts with Will County residents. Long-term programs for Will County youth include nearly 250 in the traditional 4-H Community Club, 725 in Robotics special interest clubs and nearly 150 in natural resource programs. In addition, over 2700 youth are learning of chick incubation and embryology in classrooms across the county.

All funds raised locally are eligible for matching state funds through the "County Cooperative Extension Law". Funds for the match have been designated in the state budgets but Extension has not received those funds since March 2015. We have continued to offer quality programming using carryover funds and funds from Extension Administration to make up the shortfall for the loss of the match.

I request that the Will County Board provide \$50,000 donation to University of Illinois Extension, Will County payable by June 1, 2018. United Way of Will County is currently providing \$13,000. We have requested an increase for the coming year to \$31,200. We have requested \$10,000 annually from the Will County 4-H Foundation as well. We do charge program fees according to the program type and audience to recover the cost of disposable items, but we depend on the above funders to keep our office and local staff.

Note: Kankakee County Extension has a referendum and has received \$233,000 for the current year. I have made a request to the Grundy County Board for \$25,000.

Thank you for your continued support of Will County Extension and your consideration of this request for renewed funding. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Beth LaPlante
County Extension Director
Serving...Grundy, Kankakee and Will
Counties

BAL/mlk