BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois teachers will experience agriculture firsthand and enhance student learning related to food, agriculture, and STEM agriculture careers thanks to grant funding from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (IAITC), a program of the Illinois Agriculture and Food Research Initiative’s Professional Development for Agricultural Literacy Program, was awarded $120,000 to conduct 100 multiple day trainings among K-8 teachers in Illinois over the next four years.

The IAA Foundation, which serves in a fundraising capacity for Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (IAITC), successfully secured the grant on the program’s behalf.

“Agricultural Academies are an impactful and creative way to provide agricultural literacy training, curriculum development and enhancement,” said Kevin Daughtry, education director for IAITC. “The goal is to provide K-8 teachers with the tools and skillsets necessary to enhance student learning in the areas of food and agriculture sciences.”

Topics introduced include consumer marketing, agriculture production, product processing of food sciences, biotechnolgy, horticultural sciences, communications and marketing.

Twenty-five multiple day training sessions and field trips are conducted annually and attended by approximately 500 educators who learn with increased knowledge and confidence to teach subjects in food and agricultural sciences as well as STEM integration.

Through career exploration, educators gain a clearer understanding of job opportunities available in food and agriculture sciences.

The IAITC program brings a proven and effective delivery model that gets objective and science-based agriculture content into the hands of teachers in every county throughout the state of Illinois. IAITC will continue to use this effective model to introduce lessons and enhance learning related to food, agri-science and STEM agriculture careers, helping increase agricultural literacy and career readiness.

“Each year we seek to fully fund a program of work for IAITC,” said IAA Foundation Director Susan Phillips. “This means securing close to $800,000 annually to ensure resources remain available at no cost to teachers and that county ag literacy programs can successfully reach more than 660,000 students each year. Training teachers to utilize these great educational resources in the classroom allows evenmore students the opportunity to grow and learn through agriculture.

This work is supported by the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative’s Professional Development for Agricultural Literacy Program award no. 2020-67037-31053/project accession no. 1021672 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is the nation’s leading competitive grants program for agricultural sciences. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) awards AFRI research, education, and extension grants to improve rural economies, increase food production, stimulate the bioeconomy, mitigate impacts of climate variability, address water availability issues, ensure food safety and security, enhance human nutrition and train the next generation of the agricultural workforce.

AFRI Education and Workforce Development The AFRI Education and Workforce Development Program focuses on developing the next generation of research, education and extension professionals in the food and agricultural sciences. The program educates professionals to lead agriculture into the future by solving current and future challenges facing our society. AFRI Education and Workforce Development grants project short- and long-term educational efforts and traineeship opportunities related to food and agriculture sciences.

The IAA Foundation is the nation’s leading community program for exploring agriculture in the classroom. The IAA Foundation’s mission is to support the future of agriculture and Illinois farm families through education and research. Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom is the top funding priority of the IAA Foundation.

As the charitable arm of the Illinois Farm Bureau, the IAA Foundation’s mission is to support the future of agriculture and Illinois farm families through education and research. Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom is the top funding priority of the IAA Foundation.

The Mission of Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (IAITC) is to teach Illinois Agriculture’s importance and the vital role it plays in their lives. IAITC supports local and national efforts through the delivery of learning opportunities and resources.

Topics introduced include consumer marketing, agriculture production, product processing of food sciences, biotechnology, horticultural sciences, communications and marketing.

You’re essential! We’ve always known the importance that agriculture plays in the success of our rural communities and in our entire Country. During these difficult times we’re living through, now everyone is well aware of that.

And you’re essential to the future of this organization, too. We need your continued support of Fulton County and Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) by renewing your dues if you have not already done so. IFB leadership and staff have worked tirelessly the past couple of months to ensure protection for our farmers, agriculture businesses, and our rural economies. IFB played a huge role in crafting theothy for the $2 trillion CARES Act enacted in late March, and then the follow-up provisions in May. We’ve worked to ensure assistance to small businesses, food pantries, and education resources. We continue to work to make sure your supply chain, transportation, and marketing structures are protected.

I hope that you will take a few minutes to send in your $75 dues today and help us continue the work we are doing on behalf of agriculture and rural communities. Please mail it to 15411 N 100 HWY, Lewiston, IL 62552 or call our office at 309-547-3011 to pay by debit or credit. Thank you for your continued support.

Barry Fisher, President

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A Message from FCFB President...
Adapting robots to fight COVID-19

Girish Chowdhary and colleagues at the University of Illinois developed the TerraSentia robot and are adapting it to pick fruit and disinfect surfaces. (Courtesy Photo)

Making a robot that can perform tasks in the field or in the hospital: one way to limit exposure to the coronavirus is to disinfect surfaces. (Courtesy Photo)

The researchers partnered with EarthSense, a start-up company in U of I Research Park that Chowdhary co-founded, to manufacture the robots and scale up the technology for production.

“that’s an aggressive plan,” Chowdhary says. “but we need to move fast.”

One way to limit exposure to the coronavirus is to disinfect surfaces. Robots already exist that can disinfect a room by filling it with UV light for 20 minutes. But the light is harmful to human skin, so people have to leave while the robot works.

Chowdhary teamed up with Hauser, assistant professor in Computer Science and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at U of I, to develop technologies that use UV lights, wiping, or other mechanisms for disinfection.

Chowdhary and his collaborators also saw a clear need in the healthcare industry.

“Healthcare professionals who work with COVID-19 patients have a higher risk of getting the virus than everyone else. Those professionals are our first line of defense. If they start getting sick, it’s difficult,” he says.

One step to longitudinal exposure to the coronavirus is to disinfect rooms and surfaces. Robots already exist that can disinfect a room by filling it with UV light for 20 minutes. But the light is harmful to human skin, so people have to leave while the robot works.

Chowdhary teamed up with Hauser, associate professor in the Department of Computer Science and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at U of I, to develop technologies that use UV lights, wiping, or other mechanisms for disinfection. Hauser is a renowned expert in health-care robotics and was already working on wiping and disinfection robots.

The researchers partnered with EarthSense, a start-up company in U of I Research Park that Chowdhary co-founded, to manufacture the robots and scale up the technology for production.

“the technology that works is the one that scales. It doesn’t have to be optimal or perfect,” Chowdhary says. “Sometimes we forget that as scientists, we believe in the perfect solution. Because of the urgent need, we now have to focus on scaling up.”

Chowdhary’s group will work on localization and mapping technology for enabling the robots to work close to humans as they move around in a hospital environment. A cloud-based system will make the robots traceable, showing which areas have been disinfected.

“At Carle Health we welcome advancements like this that help us stay firmly focused on caring for our patients while keeping healthcare providers and our environmental services staff safe,” says Lynne Barnes, Carle senior vice president of facilities. “Times like this, especially, require openness to new ideas, and this idea certainly would have helpful day to own a bakery or restaurant.

Thomas Janssen is a nine-year member of the Avondale 4-H Club and a 2020 graduate of Abington-Avon High School. Hes set to attend Bradley University in the fall, majoring in Computer Science, with career plans to become a software developer or project manager in the technology field.

Hale Hendel is a 10-year member of the Avondale 4-H Club, and a 2020 graduate of Abington-Avon High School. Hes set to attend Illinois Wesleyan University this fall, double majoring in Psychology and Music. Her career plans are to be a Music-Therapist/ Clinical Psychologist working with young people who are diagnosed with cancer or terminal illnesses.

Emma Ethington is a 10-year member of the Fairview Hawkies 4-H Club, and a 2020 graduate of Spoon River Valley High School. Emma will attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the fall, majoring in Animal Science. Hes plans to become a Veterinary Assistant.

These 4-H members are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to 4-H over the years.

For more information on the Fulton County 4-H Program and its vast array of activities, call 547-3711 or email bjsontl@Illinois.edu.

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Hydroponic lettuce production at WIU

Collaborative agriculture research at Western Illinois University, with a boost from a recently awarded federal grant, means opportunities for faculty and students to study hydroponic lettuce production. Here, WIU faculty member Shelby Henning and Dan Atherton observe the lettuce growing hydroponically in Knaublauch Hall. (Courtesy Photo)

Lettuce planted April 13 was ready for harvest in mid-May

MACOMB, Ill. – Collaborative agriculture research at Western Illinois University, with a boost from a recently awarded federal grant, means opportunities for faculty and students to study hydroponic lettuce production, with the aid of hyperspectral reflectance technology, in future semesters. WIU Agriculture Assistant Professors Shelby Henning and Dan Atherton began collaborating two years ago, when Henning and his horticulture students, along with technical assistance from Atherton, built a greenhouse with aid of a recent grant, means opportunities for faculty and students to study hydroponic lettuce production and data acquisition process. Also, additional lighting technologies will be evaluated for lettuce production in the new system.

Collaborative agriculture research at Western Illinois University, with a boost from a recently awarded federal grant, means opportunities for faculty and students to study hydroponic lettuce production. Here, WIU faculty member Shelby Henning and Dan Atherton observe the lettuce growing hydroponically in Knaublauch Hall. (Courtesy Photo)

The Fulton County Farm Bureau will host a blood drive with the American Red Cross on Monday, July 27 from 1-6pm. We will be operating our donation drive using some extra precautions. The guidelines that we are following to help keep donors safe, in addition to enhanced cleaning and social distancing as much as possible, are:

1. We are asking that all donors schedule an appointment online. This can be done through our office at 847-3013, by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS or at redcross.org. We won’t only be able to walk-ins where there is an opening in the schedule or there is a “no-show” appointment. This allows us to practice social distancing as much as possible and avoid a surge of donors at any time during the blood drive. For the BEST experience, PLEASE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT.

2. We are asking all donors to wear masks while at the drive. One will be provided for any donor that does not have one. If you are unwilling to wear a mask, we ask that you postpone your donation.

3. We will be taking temperatures of donors and volunteers as soon as they walk in the door. Any donor above 99.5 will be asked to come back another time when they do not have a fever.

4. We are asking that no one additional, aside from donors and volunteers are present at the blood drive – ie, no children or off site visitors.

5. We will only be allowed to serve prepackaged snacks as refreshments, so NO Farm Bureau-women baked goods or sand-

6. In addition to these precautions, Red Cross will also be testing blood dona-
tions for COVID-19 antibodies. The an-
tibody test is authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and will indicate if the donor’s immune system has produced antibodies to the coronavirus, re-

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Illinois river closure

As a reminder the Illinois River will be closing to navigation for the repair of 5 lock systems July 1, 2020. This has been a 3 year preparation process to perform overdue maintenance on these lock systems. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has indicated that all signs point to the projects being on schedule and completed by October 29, 2020. USACE has launched a website to outline the repair process and timeline.

As part of Illinois Farm Bureau’s efforts to prepare members for the consolidated closures, an informational page has been created on the transportation resources section of the ILFB website.

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