**LOCAL AFFAIRS**

**\*Pulaski-Alexander, "Welcome to the World of Refuges" -** As concerns for a possible refuge grew for 2 CFBs in the northern part of Illinois, our CFB hosted a tour for concerned members and local officials to see our refuge and the impacts it has made. The purpose of the tour was to showcase what a refuge looks like and to educate the other attendees about the negative effects that the refuge created for the land and the community. After lunch, conversations about a refuge in your community was shared followed by a bus tour of the local refuge. To prepare for the tour, a route was prepared. Our volunteers wanted to make sure that the attendees went on a route that showed them first-hand the wetland and the socioeconomic decline. Old documentation of the refuge was reviewed and information was gathered to help explain the process of working with a refuge and how they attain private properties through various methods. The attendees were given insight on what could happen to their area if the refuge was successful. Their eyes were open by this process and the concern was evident. Later, attendees continued to reach out and contact presenters on ways to handle complications with the process of refuge creation. Attendees shared their experiences with others within their counties and the message was driven home as they fully understand the challenges and the negative effects that are possibly coming in their direction.

**Stark, "Stronger Economies Together" -** Our vision for the Regional Economic Development Plan is to serve as a road map to strengthen the future economic development efforts of the three county team. Key regional stakeholders embrace a spirit of regionalism to support this initiative. Implementing the action items described within this document will strengthen the ability of the region to secure its economic future and position it as a competitive region. This plan reflects an active participation from business, civic and community leaders. Significant research and discussions led to the development of the region's High Quality Plan. Launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the Stronger Economies Together program are to build collaboration between communities in a region, provides economic analyses that is tailored to help capture the region's current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages and is supported by technical assistance provided by land-grant university extension systems to the regions over a period of several months including the SET training. Our three county region decided in May 2015 to apply for the Stronger Economies Together. The region started working with the SET Team in the summer of 2015. The SET team started recruiting participants in August 2015. The Civic Forum was the first meeting which was held in September 2015. The second SET meeting was held October 29, 2015 at a county EMA building. At this meeting the results of the Civic Forum were discussed and clusters were identified for further research. At the December 10, 2015 meeting held at a community center at which further analysis of the clusters were presented and discussed. The March 23, 2016 meeting was held at the county Farm Bureau. Strategies were developed for the topics of tourism, broadband infrastructure and an economic development council using the CARE Model (Creation, Attraction, Retention, Expansion). On April 21, 2016 the SET meeting held at a coffee shop and the participants discussed how to connect community capitals. The June 16, 2016 meeting was held at the EMA building again. SMART goals were developed for the areas identified. The final meeting was comprised of making additions and corrections to the final plan. This included approval from our community partners. The SET initiative has brought together a resurgence in regional thinking, planning, and action. New partnerships have been created, plans have been set, strategies are outlined, and people are engaged in implementing the ideas developed during the SET discussions. The steering committee has generated a 20+ page document outlining the goals and process to be used in implementing projects relating to economic development for the 3 county region. Outlined in the report are the three regional goals developed through SET. 1) The Agribusiness-Technology and Economic Development goal focuses on building, creating and retaining an entrepreneurial culture for businesses. We will create a regional consortium of small and large companies in order to increase their competitiveness by combining efforts that create new uses for existing commodities, technology enhancement and advancement as well as value chain development. 2) The Tourism goal focuses on a growing regional cluster, which has the potential to grow our economic reach into the three county region and increase outside revenue. 3) The Infrastructure goal focuses on facilitating the expansion of existing businesses while attracting new higher wage industry sectors.

**Calhoun, "Saving Ag Education in High School" -** The purpose of this program was to raise funds to keep Ag in our schools. We are developing members of our FFA Alumni Committee. Our school was going to have to cut the Ag teacher for the 2015-2016 year. We had Dinner/Auction last November to raise funds. We asked the school board what it would take to keep our Ag teacher. They stated if we could donate $20,000, they would be able to keep an Ag teacher. We raised over $24,000 and was able to donate $20,000 to our school. We succeeded in our endeavor. Committee 40% Alumni 40% FFA 20% We put repeated articles in our local newspaper, radio, FB and FFA newsletter, and the multi county free newspaper. Local paper (6,500 distribution)

**Edwards, "Tile Drain Monitoring Project" -** Intent: To analyze the economic impact of nutrient loss from fertilizers on tiled ground, while identifying which conservation practices and nitrogen application methods achieve the most desirable results; To test crops for nutrient uptake through soil tests and N-Watch studies; To monitor different types of farm fields for the best management practices to minimize fertilizer loss; All while supporting and preserving the best interests of our agricultural communities while working with various groups involved in the agricultural industry. Results: Our project involved 37 fields in 9 counties in southeastern Illinois. We used student interns to sample tile drains multiple times in the growing season for nutrient loss. These fields are also soil tested multiple times and when applicable, N-Watch tests were performed on them. Based on the testing we conducted, we observed a consistently low output of phosphorus in our tile lines. Nitrates fluctuated greatly. Our results also showed our area some concrete, real world numbers on nutrient loss. These results will allow all groups involved to help farmers make better decisions on their fertilizer management practices, which is turn should help them reduce their loss of

nutrients. Additionally, we will be able to show environmental groups and other anti-agricultural groups how our farmers are being the best stewards of the land they can be. Those farmers who volunteered their fields to be tested were presented their results and are now using these to have conversations with their input suppliers on what practices to use on these fields to minimize the nutrient loss and maximize their profits. We plan to continue this project into the next year, and produce a PowerPoint and hard copy report of the data to share with agricultural partners, in the area and around the world. This project involved GROWMARK, the local service company, Water Agricultural Lab, the local junior college, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board, and the IFB. "In-kind" contributions amounted to over $50,000. The project was featured in multiple articles in FarmWeek, local media, social media, as well as, the multi-county member publication.

**Douglas, "Drainage Law Workshop" -** Our County is heavily invested in having field tile. With the amount of tile, we are also heavily invested in drainage districts. At a morning CFB breakfast this year, it was brought to our attention by a Farm Bureau member that there seems to be a lot of questions and confusion when it comes to drainage districts and how they operate. To help our members with these concerns and questions, our CFB held a workshop on drainage districts. This meeting explained how drainage districts were formed, how to re activate abandoned drainage districts, the law behind the districts, and lastly how to form new drainage districts. 46 people attended this workshop that included 4 speakers well versed in drainage law, drainage engineering, and other information. Water testing from our local SWCD was also available at the meeting and was completed while members were able to take advantage of all the information presented to them. A lunch was also provided for all that attended.

**Johnson, "Who should pay for the Courthouse?" -** Our Board of Directors was approach by several of our members wanting advice on the Sales Tax Increase referendum that would be on the March ballot. The 1% sales tax would be used to build and maintain new County government facilities. After much discussion with County Commissioners, County Officials, and various county leaders, our Board decide to actively support the Sales Tax increase referendum. With funding for the new facilities coming from sales tax, it would spread the cost beyond our local residents and landowners and also prevent the funding being attached to real estate taxes. The Board published an open letter to county residents in our local papers and our president also published a letter to the editor. By working closely with several community organizations and leaders as a united front, county citizens understood the importance and advantages of passing the sales tax increase and the referendum was successfully voted in.`

**\*Mercer, "Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Videos" -** 800 impacted. As part of Illinois Farm Bureau's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy grant, our County Farm Bureau partnered up with two other County Farm Bureaus to produce our own videos that promote the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy. We used a local tv station cameraman to capture and edit the footage. The videos cover the following topics: benefits of using cover crops, saturated buffers, fall aerial application of cover crops, the results of using the cover crops, and livestock and their impact on the NLRS. The videos were promoted through social media and an email blast with the video link to every voting member's email address in the three counties. The videos that have been shot, edited, and published have about 100 views each. We have more videos to come with the fall harvest season quickly approaching and will use the same method to get the word out about the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy. We decided to do the video project because we thought that farmers could watch the videos on their schedule and learn from what is and isn't working for other farmers. We also saw it as an excellent opportunity to educate consumers on what farmers are doing to reduce their nutrient loss.

**Washington, "Community Impact Grants" -** Our CFB understands the amount of hard work and sweat equity that is required to make a lasting impact in our community. For over 90 years, our CFB has offered programs and services in our county to inform, strengthen, and develop the agricultural industry. We continue that same mission today by investing time and resources to improve the economic well-being of agriculture, and enriching the quality of our rural way of life. Despite our best efforts, we realize that we cannot meet all of the needs in the county by ourselves. This is why we offered our 3rd Annual “Community Impact Grant Program” this year. There are many great ideas for community-based projects which, unfortunately, do not become a reality. Our Community Impact Grant Program sought to identify various projects that will improve our community and create partnerships with groups and individuals to make those projects a reality. Examples of eligible organizations included: schools, civic organizations, churches, 4-H clubs, FFA chapters, fraternities, sororities, and etc… Our Board of Directors developed this program as an opportunity to identify and partner with others in our county on projects that will have a lasting impact in our communities. We had another great response in our third year, receiving six outstanding applications that requested more than $10,000 of the $5,000 in funds budgeted (received four applications in our first year, and 9 in our second). Ultimately, only five of the six proposals were granted their requested funds at about the 96% level, utilizing the full $5,000 allocated for the program. Technology updates at a community library, a new gazebo at a community park, hydroponics equipment for a local FFA Chapter's, a new deep freeze for the county's food pantry, and a cleaning supplies bucket project for a local 4-H club were the efforts that received funding in our second year. Our leadership was extremely pleased with the quality of the partnerships developed, and look forward to next year's crop of community partners.

**Crawford, "Tile Drain Monitoring Project" -** To analyze the economic impact of nutrient loss from fertilizers on tiled ground, while identifying which conservation practices and nitrogen application methods achieve the most desirable results; To test crops for nutrient uptake through soil tests and N-Watch studies; To monitor different types of farm fields for the best management practices to minimize fertilizer loss; All while supporting and preserving the best interests of our agricultural communities while working with various groups involved in the agricultural industry. Our project involved 37 fields in 9 counties in southeastern Illinois. We used student interns to sample tile drains multiple times in the growing season for nutrient loss. These fields are also soil tested multiple times and when applicable, N-Watch tests were performed on them. Based on the testing we conducted, we observed a consistently low output of phosphorus in our tile lines. Nitrates fluctuated greatly. Our results also showed our area some concrete, real world numbers on nutrient loss. These results will allow all groups involved to help farmers make better decisions on their fertilizer management practices, which is turn should help them reduce their loss of nutrients. Additionally, we will be able to show environmental groups and other anti-agricultural groups how our farmers are being the best stewards of the land they can be. Those farmers who volunteered their fields to be tested were presented their results and are now using these to have conversations with their input suppliers on what practices to use on these fields to minimize the nutrient loss and maximize their profits. We plan to continue this project into the next year, and produce a PowerPoint and hard copy report of the data to share with agricultural partners, in the area and around the world. This project involved GROWMARK, the local service company, Water Agricultural Lab, the local junior college, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board, and the IFB. "In-kind" contributions amounted to over $50,000. The project was featured in multiple articles in FarmWeek, local media, social media, as well as, the multi-county member publication.

**Jersey, "Cover Crop & Livestock Integration Field Day" -** In an effort to offer our members an opportunity to learn more about cover crops and how to incorporate livestock into the mix, a program and field day was developed to cover the subject. A Farm Bureau family (past director and 2 current Young Leaders) have quite a bit of experience with cover crops and just recently added a few cattle to their operation, so they agreed to host the program. Our local Energy & Environmental Stewardship Educator with U of I Extension was contacted to help develop the program. The evening began with all participants touring the cover crop plots and hearing from the farm family who hosted the program. Following the tour, participants were divided into three groups to participate in round table style discussions. The three topics discussed were - overviews of cover crop experiences (led by area farmers who have been using cover crops for several years), Manure Applications & Cover Crops: Understanding the Nutrient Cycling (led by Dr. Morgan Hayes, Extension Assistant Professor and Ed Ballard, retired Educator, U of I Extension) and The Challenges of Livestock Buildings & Emerging Issues (led by Nic Anderson, Illinois Livestock Development Working Group). Each group spent 15-20 minutes at each station, then rotated to the next topic. After all groups had discussed each topic area, they came back together as one group for a panel discussion with all the speakers. We are very pleased with the outcome of the program. We had good participation from within the county, as well, we drew members from four surrounding counties. An unintended benefit of the program, was the creation of a personal connection for producers within a several county area who can use each other as resources as they move forward with cover crops and livestock.

**Clay, "CFB Hosts Cover Crop and Nutrient Strategy Meeting" -** With the increasing threat of more regulations from the EPA, we find it is extremely important to inform our farmers of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, as well as cover crops, and other practices to help reduce nutrient loss. That's why we held a meeting that spoke about these topics and others. The evening started with a catered dinner for the attendees, as well as speakers. The first speaker of the night was Lyndsey Ramsey, Associate Director of Natural and Environmental Resources with IFB. She informed farmers about the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy and how the EPA is pushing for a 15% reduction of Nitrate as well as a 25% reduction of Phosphorus in the Gulf of Mexico by 2025. She also wanted farmers to know that the strategy is there to help reduce what we lose, not reduce what we use. Attendees were also given handouts that listed various strategies which help with nutrient loss and the cost of each of those. Ramsey also discussed what NREC does for farmers and how for every 1 ton of fertilizer purchased, $1 goes to that council to help with nutrient research and education. NREC will be hosting webinars this year, so be on the lookout if you would like to hear more about their efforts. The next speaker was Kris Reynolds, a cover crop specialist with the Illinois Council on Best Management Practices. He discussed various cover crops and which were best to utilize in our area. Reynolds also spoke about different seeding methods and pressed to always pay attention to seeding dates of cover crops. Other topics that he covered included: erosion control, herbicide programs, and cover crop termination. In addition, CCA credits were offered for attending the meeting. Afterwards, our local Resource Conservationist and District Conservationist spoke about the programs that the Natural Resources Conservation Services offered and what practices were included in those programs to help with nutrient management. They also discussed and showed pictures of practices that were being implemented locally to help reduce nutrient loss. In all, the meeting was extremely educational and we hope it gave our farmers a better understanding of what they can do to help reduce nutrient loss in their fields.

**Edgar, "Ameren Transmission Project" -** For our county, Ameren’s proposed transmission line remains on high priority in members’ minds. One member specifically organized landowner meetings regularly to connect and present a united front to land agents and contract survey employees. As a result of the controversial nature of this topic, meetings typically bring 50 or more people to the County Farm Bureau. Landowners hired a local attorney to represent the group. Together with Illinois Farm Bureau’s resources and IFB Laura Harmon, the local lawyer worked with residents to mount a case against an unconstitutional procedure in reviewing such a large project through Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). When new pertinent information is made available the local lawyer provides residents an update on his case, other wise a local member has lead the meetings. Though residents know not to expect actual transmission poles anytime soon, Ameren sent contracted survey agents to survey land. Residents resisted surveying efforts, however the local lawyer informed landowners of their rights and reviewed the Public Utilities Act to help landowners under terms such as “soft survey.” Local media from the university TV station to our local newspaper covered local court dates resisting this public utilities act and continued features with landowners through actual surveys. Residents also frequently corresponded with local legislators regarding this project. Local legislators joined in efforts to fight this transmission line. In total, approximately 100 people joined this cause through meetings, media coverage, local court dates, and connecting with local county board meetings. Due to the continued resistance and united force of these landowners, the county is the only current county with resisting landowners that have a large majority owners not having signed easement agreements. over 50 landowners have been served eminent domain papers and are currently fighting the proposed line in court.

**Wabash, "Tile Drain Monitoring Project" -** Intent: To analyze the economic impact of nutrient loss from fertilizers on tiled ground, while identifying which conservation practices and nitrogen application methods achieve the most desirable results; To test crops for nutrient uptake through soil tests and N-Watch studies; To monitor different types of farm fields for the best management practices to minimize fertilizer loss; All while supporting and preserving the best interests of our agricultural communities while working with various groups involved in the agricultural industry. Results: Our project involved 37 fields in 9 counties in southeastern Illinois. We used student interns to sample tile drains multiple times in the growing season for nutrient loss. These fields are also soil tested multiple times and when applicable, N-Watch tests were performed on them. Based on the testing we conducted, we observed a consistently low output of phosphorus in our tile lines. Nitrates fluctuated greatly. Our results also showed our area some concrete, real world numbers on nutrient loss. These results will allow all groups involved to help farmers make better decisions on their fertilizer management practices, which is turn should help them reduce their loss of nutrients. Additionally, we will be able to show environmental groups and other anti-agricultural groups how our farmers are being the best stewards of the land they can be. Those farmers who volunteered their fields to be tested were presented their results and are now using these to have conversations with their input suppliers on what practices to use on these fields to minimize the nutrient loss and maximize their profits. We plan to continue this project into the next year, and produce a PowerPoint and hard copy report of the data to share with agricultural partners, in the area and around the world. This project involved GROWMARK, the local service company, Water Agricultural Lab, the local junior college, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board, and the IFB. "In-kind" contributions amounted to over $50,000. The project was featured in multiple articles in FarmWeek, local media, social media, as well as, the multi-county member publication.

**\*Marshall-Putnam, "SET Program" -** The CFB was approached by the county board to assist with finding new members for our local Economic Development Council. Due to the fact that our county is small, we are unable to hire a full-time Economic Development Coordinator. The CFB took it upon themselves to seek out grant opportunities for the county and learned of the SET program through a website at Purdue University. Our vision for the Regional Economic Development Plan is to serve as a road map to strengthen the future economic development efforts of the three county team. Key regional stakeholders embrace a spirit of regionalism to support this initiative. Implementing the action items described within this document will strengthen the ability of the region to secure its economic future and position it as a competitive region. This plan reflects an active participation from business, civic and community leaders. Significant research and discussions led to the development of the region's High Quality Plan. Launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the Stronger Economies Together program are to build collaboration between communities in a region, provides economic analyses that is tailored to help capture the region's current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages and is supported by technical assistance provided by land-grant university extension systems to the regions over a period of several months including the SET training. Our three county region decided in May 2015 to apply for the Stronger Economies Together. The region started working with the SET Team in the summer of 2015. The SET team started recruiting participants in August 2015. The Civic Forum was the first meeting which was held in September 2015. The second SET meeting was held October 29, 2015 at a county EMA building. At this meeting the results of the Civic Forum were discussed and clusters were identified for further research. At the December 10, 2015 meeting held at a community center at which further analysis of the clusters were presented and discussed. The March 23, 2016 meeting was held at the county Farm Bureau. Strategies were developed for the topics of tourism, broadband infrastructure and an economic development council using the CARE Model (Creation, Attraction, Retention, Expansion). On April 21, 2016 the SET meeting held at a coffee shop and the participants discussed how to connect community capitals. The June 16, 2016 meeting was held at the EMA building again. SMART goals were developed fro the areas identified. The final meeting was comprised of making additions and corrections to the final plan. this included approval from our community partners. The SET initiative has brought together a resurgence in regional thinking, planning, and action. New partnerships have been created, plans have been set, strategies are outlined, and people are engaged in implementing the ideas developed during the SET discussions. The steering committee has generated a 20+ page document outlining the goals and process to be used in implementing projects relating to economic development for the 3 county region. Outlined in the report are the three regional goals developed through SET. 1) The Agribusiness-Technology and Economic Development goal focuses on building, creating and retaining an entrepreneurial culture for businesses. We will create a regional consortium of small and large companies in order to increase their competitiveness by combining efforts that create new uses for existing commodities, technology enhancement and advancement as well as value chain development. 2) The Tourism goal focuses on a growing regional cluster, which has the potential to grow our economic reach into the three county region and increase outside revenue. 3) The Infrastructure goal focuses on facilitating the expansion of existing businesses while attracting new higher wage industry sectors.

**Logan, "Farm On" -** Farm On We have been working on a program aimed at a potential issue right here in our County. Area Farmers are the life blood of our local economy. They pump large amounts of funds into our economy and provide multiple jobs that trickle through our entire community. From equipment dealers to mechanics, welders, feed mills, elevators, seed dealers, seed packagers, cob plants, fertilizer retailers, veterinarians, tax and accounting services, banks, auto dealers and even businesses such as local restaurants their reach is far. A growing concern is the age of the farming community. In the past the farm was typically passed to a family member to take over. This still happens on a regular basis today. However, more and more frequently there is not someone of the next generation ready to take on the lifestyle and responsibility of the farm. Many times the assets are sold on auction and the farmland is either rented to a neighbor or often times rented to the highest bidder or sold. To combat this dissolution of the midsize family farm, we created a program called “Farm On”. The idea of the Farm On program is to inform retiring farmers about some local young men and women who have interest in production agriculture. Our hope is that one of these young people could be a potential suitor for the transition of the operation in question. This transition could consist of anything from a onetime buy-out to a partnership that evolves over time. A database with applications of these aspiring young farmers has been compiled at the office. The applicants may or may not already be farming, but they all have a desire to farm. Each of these applicants has paid $50 to have their application submitted. This is in hope of showing their true sincerity in their interest to farm. If a local producer is considering retirement they can come in and view the applications. From that point the program would bring the two parties together to see if there is a good “match” for a future transition. The goal of the program is to ensure that production agriculture continues to thrive in our County and surrounding communities by opening the door of opportunity to young aspiring farmers at the same time providing retiring farmers a new option of giving a young person a chance.

**Wayne, "Tile Drain Monitoring Project" -** Intent: The purpose of this project was to analyze the economic impact of nutrient loss on tiled ground, while identifying which conservation practices and nitrogen application methods achieve the most desirable results; all while supporting and preserving the best interests of our agricultural communities while working with various groups involved in the agricultural industry. The planning committee met on multiple occasions through the year and utilized Cloud Technology to plan and share documents related to the project. Results: Our project involved 37 fields in 9 counties in southeastern Illinois. We used student interns to sample each tile drain multiple times in the growing season. It also involved GROWMARK, the local service company, Waters Agricultural Lab, the local junior college, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board, and the IFB. "In-kind" contributions amounted to over $50,000. The project was featured in multiple articles in FarmWeek, local media, social media, as well as, the multi-county member publication. Based on the tile testing we conducted, we observed a consistently low output of phosphorus in our tile lines. but nitrates fluctuated greatly. Our results also showed our area some concrete, real world numbers on nutrient loss. These results will allow all groups involved to help farmers make better decisions on their fertilizer management practices, which in turn should help them reduce their loss of nutrients. Additionally, we will be able to show environmental groups and other anti-agricultural groups how our farmers are being the best stewards of the land they can be. We plan to continue this project into the next year, and produce a PowerPoint and hard copy report of the data to share with agricultural partners, in the area and around the world.

**Fayette, "Summer Weekend Meal Bag for Children" -** The Women's Committee hosted a craft show in the fall and raised over $400 for use in a future project. The WC decided to use the funds to help support the Summer Lunch Bag Program for children that is put on by a local church. The church assembles bags that consist of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, drinks, and other food items depending on what is donated. The bags are distributed to children every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for 10 weeks throughout the summer, beginning in June and ending in August, at 5 different locations throughout the county. The WC met with the lady in charge of the program and asked how they could help. She said whatever help they wanted to provide would be appreciated. The WC decided to provide a weekend meal bag for the children. Members of the WC met every other week to assemble 200 bags. The weekend bags were given out every other Friday, along with the lunch bags at all 5 locations. Over the coarse of those 5 weeks, approximately 1000 weekend meal bags were distributed. The weekend meal bags consisted of ramen noodles, oatmeal, a granola bar, a drink, applesauce, and peanut butter crackers. The children and families really appreciated the extra meals, especially since the children aren't receiving any meals from school. The cost of the weekend bag the WC assembled was approximately $1 per bag. Due to the volume of bags distributed, the $400 from the craft show was not enough to cover the cost. The Board of Directors thought this was a great program for the WC to take part in and generously donated the remaining $600.

**Fulton, "Livestock Farm Support Among Local Elected Leaders" -** It January a member of our County Government Board notified us that a group of neighbors had formed to oppose a hog farm being planned for west of our County Seat. The group was coming to the board to pass a resolution opposing the farm and to ask for changes in Legislation to create an avenue for local citing. We made a presentation to the Zoning Committee of the County Board on February 2 using a power point presentation prepared by IFB and our own local staff. The opposition addressed the board first. Following our presentation, the Zoning Committee refused to entertain a motion to take up discussion on the resolution. The Zoning Chair then asked us to make the same presentation at the meeting of the entire County Board the following week. Following our presentation that night, the same opposition group from the committee meeting addressed the County Board during the Public Comment period (limited to 5 minutes) asking for the same resolution. Again, no member of the County Board introduced the resolution. Another hog farm is being planned. We are not naive enough to think that the issue has gone away, but we are appreciative of our County Government Board members' actions and willingness to communicate with us. This issue has also provided us with a wonderful opportunity to work with our County Board and to improve our communication and cooperation with them. They are actually calling our staff now when opposition groups bring materials to them! We also wrote Letters to the Editor of the one daily paper in our county and the weekly paper. (combined circulation of approx. 30,000). We had many favorable comments as a result.

**\*Cass-Morgan, "Lock & Dam Tour (Corn Grant)" -** With the grant, we were able to secure a nice charter bus on a hot day (100 degrees!) for our members and guests to ride around that day. The area has not had the opportunity for a tour of the lock & dam on the Illinois River for a while. It is time for our legislators and local producers to see for themselves the (worst-shaped) locks in the state. The LaGrange Lock & Dam site was ready for us when we arrived that morning with a full staff of Corps of Engineers waiting. We had 4 presenters and tour guides showing us every aspect of the lock system. Members, media, local officials, and legislators were able to see first hand, the conditions and happenings in our area and on the Illinois. We then boarded the bus for Alton with a quick lunch and then tour of Melvin Price Lock & Dam on the Mississippi. The tour of that facility was a little different. It had a beautiful museum attached and obviously, a larger lock which was great to compare La Grange to. Through these tours we had a large audience who will be able to tell the story of river transportation and the important role it plays for Illinois agriculture. The event gave nearly 30 people a chance to tour the locks up close. The greater audience will be others hearing by word of mouth and hopefully other legislators who could help find money to fix what we need done on these locks to ensure efficient river transportation. In our audience we had a local Senator, two county board members, chamber staff, radio personnel, IFB, IL Corn, IL Soy, and others represented. News releases of the event went to local papers and to our members. Pictures were shared on all social media sites. TWITTER: IFB, IL Corn, and a local Senator all tagged CFB on their tweets. Estimated reach: 2,000 FACEBOOK: CFB shared pictures, others shared or tagged family in the photos. Estimated reach: 1,000 NEWSLETTER: 1,140 CFB farmer members. RADIO: 1,000 listeners LOCAL PAPER: 15,000 households saw the invite for members and community leaders to attend. FARMWEEK: 7/5/16 edition had photos and a cutline describing our event and a similar tour in northwest IL.

**\*Montgomery, "Adopt County Board Members" -** Our 18 board members decided that since the county board had only 2 or 3 of the 21 county board members that were directly related to the farm that they would implement a new program similar to ILFB’s Adopted Legislator Program. We would implement Adopt-a-County Board member. After talking it over with the county board chairman he was excited to take it before his board. We now have 2 of our 18 board of directors who have adopted 2 county board members. They have done everything from planting soybeans in the spring to combining wheat this summer to trimming hooves on mules, getting them prepared for the show circuit. The adopted county board members are amazed at the technology that the modern farmer has at his finger tips. It's not scratching in the dust with your finger anymore, it is having the I-Pad or smart phone with you all the time to monitor what's going on in the field. Our board has also went to work with the county board members also. One visited a local news paper where one of the county board members is employed. Both parties agree how similar each business is keeping up on the new technology, the long hours getting either a crop in or a newspaper out and the importance of keeping the equipment in perfect running order. This program makes working on tuff issues a whole lot easier because the board members know each other.

**Bureau, "Nutrient Stewardship Field Day" -** After a survey of the lady landowners who attended a Nutrient Loss Reduction Seminar, it was apparent that a local field day demonstrating conversation efforts should be held. Members stated that they were interested in seeing, first hand specific conservation practices which were highlighted during the seminar held earlier in the spring. The County Farm Bureau got to work. Staff members contacted a local group to ask to join their efforts in Nutrient Management. This led to co-sponsorships in the upcoming field day, among other local opportunities Several planning meetings were held with those involved. Duties for the event were delegated. There was alot to do; order tents, contact speakers, line up equipment, solicit donations and market the event. Farm Bureau was asked to take over the marketing. A list of over 400 names were surfaced of farmers and operators who have an interest in nutrient stewardship. This made for a huge mailing list! Post cards were created, printed, and sent to everyone on the list informing them of the field day on August 23rd. Inserts were placed into ag business billing statements and press releases were sent to local publications. The planning committee, consisting of members from FS, Crop Production Services, Monsanto, DeKalb-ASGROW, John Deere, Northern Partners, and various Farmers met the day before to set up the location, which was held at a local farm. The day’s events started with a welcome by a committee member in the main tent and then continue with speakers covering subjects relating to current Nutrient Loss Reduction efforts, N Watch, Nitrate Testing and N rate plots and finally Cover Crops. At the outside stations, participants were able to take part in three sessions of their choosing. Exhibiters at outside stations talked about Nitrogen stabilizers, precision technology, soil health, cover crops and starter fertilizers. A local FFA was on hand to cook and serve lunch. Field trials began after lunch. Water testing was also available for those landowners or operators who would like to test their tiles, streams or ponds for Nitrates. Those involved in the planning were happy with the day. The committee has already met again to begin planning for its next Nutrient Management educational program.

**Kankakee, "US Fish & Wildlife Refuge Reintroduced & Opposition Activities" -** A wildlife refuge in our County was proposed in 1997 by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). The County Farm Bureau along with County Government and the regional Chamber of Commerce each passed resolutions taking positions against the proposal. The main reasons for opposition were that the refuge would have taken valuable farmland out of production, altered and disrupted established watersheds and drainage patterns, altered and disrupted transportation infrastructure, displaced many residents, reduced the tax base for the area, reduced recreational activities, and was inconsistent with the County’s land use plans. With virtually no community support for the proposal and from pressure from state and federal legislators, the refuge proposal was defeated and was withdrawn in 2001. Unfortunately, the refuge was reintroduced and the same concerns with the federal project remain. The Farm Bureau is fully engaged in this issue and conducted many activities in opposition of the refuge this program year. Our County Farm Bureau connected with a Farm Bureau in southern Illinois which has had a USFWS refuge in their community for over 25 years. A conference call was held between the two groups and IFB staff to discuss the impact of having a refuge in their area. Following the conference call, it was decided to organize a trip to tour the southern Illinois community and refuge. 15 community members participated in the trip which included Farm Bureau members, elected officials, a Congressional staffer, and other interested parties. The cost of the trip was nearly $2,500 but it was worth the expense due to the information gathered. Members of a neighboring FB (which is impacted on a much smaller scale) also participated in this trip. The Farm Bureau hosted an informational meeting giving a presentation on the concerns with the project to an audience of 200 landowners, farmers, and residents. IFB staff assisted with this presentation and two Farm Bureau members from southern Illinois who our group met during the trip to their community made the 5 hour drive to speak about the real world impact of having a refuge in their community. Members of a neighboring FB (which is impacted on a much smaller scale) also participated in the meeting and discussion. Large 2' by 3' maps showing the refuge focus areas in our community were made and have been displayed in the community. Three different background and update papers were written by our County Farm Bureau as well as a handout given at events and the county fair. Many interviews with the media were conducted in order to express our concerns with the refuge. Through this work, we have gained several new FB members, have activated some of our more passive members, and have built some strong coalitions in our community that had not been explored previously. This is a priority issue for our County Farm Bureau. We will continue sharing information on the federal project and will continue working to defeat this refuge. In the next program year there is a petition ready to be circulated online and in hard copy format and a "congressional inquiry" letter is being prepared for delivery in Washington DC by our County Farm Bureau president.

**Stephenson, "Community College Ag Program Support" -** Following our $10,000 donation to help jump start the expansion of ag programming at our local community college, we continue to work with the school to provide support on various levels. We are soliciting donations of various equipment and resources to support programs, and we are working with staff to provide whatever means of support we can. A new Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter was started last year, and we look to become further engaged and integrated with that effort.

**\*Cook, "Two-Day Staff Exchange Program" -** This project provided county legislative, communication, and economic development staff with a hands on learning experience in farming and farm businesses in an urban county. INTENT: The goal of this project was to develop participants' awareness of farms, farm businesses, and food processors in the county while furthering Farm Bureau's relationship with county government. Over the course of 7 meetings, 9 Policy Team volunteers selected 3 tour sites including: \* Worldwide food processor \* Start-up distillery \* Urban farm 2 Policy Team volunteers and 2 board members participated on the tours. This was the fifth year of the program. Of the 23 participants: \* 4 county staff members attended last year's program \* 10 were new to the program In addition, 2 lawmakers attended the program. Historically: \* 13 individuals attended the program in 2012 \* 28 individuals attended the program in 2013 \* 26 individuals attended the program in 2014 \* 28 individuals attended the program in 2015 \* 23 individuals attended the program in 2016 This program was discussed in the monthly and legislative publications, website, and on social media. NEEDS MET: This project provided 23 county and state staff with a hands on learning experience in farming and farm businesses. ATTENDANCE/IMPACT: 23 county staff members benefited from this program. VOLUNTEERS: 9 Policy Team volunteers participated in the planning process, 2 Policy Team volunteers and 2 board members participated on the tours.

**Kane, "County Board Agriculture Committee Presentations & Attendance" -** Year round. Since our County has a Farmland Protection Program and a Local Farm & Foods Ordinance to promote agriculture in the County, the County Board also approved the addition of an Agriculture Committee to help coordinate issues and initiatives between the Health, Development and other county departments and keep the County Board abreast of the needs of agriculture and farmers in our County. Farm Bureau is a key player in the Ag Committee, providing a monthly report of FB issues and activities. Our CBF Secretary/Treasurer serves as a member of the County Board Ag Committee. At least one CFB representative attended each of the 11 meetings of the committee in 2015-16, making presentations to the committee on FB purpose, philosophy and history; Harvest for ALL opportunities, work with direct marketers and specialty growers and a host of other topics. Agendas include education sessions for County Board members on farmland, drainage, zoning, land use and other ag issues from FB and other local ag “partners”. The Committee gives farmers the opportunity to work with on all types of ag issues & appointments and as advocates for agriculture in County government. Ag Committee monthly Agendas topics included: 9-17-15. Food Hub Feasibility Study: Phase I conclusion and USDA “Know your Farmer, Know your Food” Chicago conference debrief 10-22-15. Food and Agriculture RoadMap (FARM Illinois) update and University of Illinois Horticulture research center future presentation 11-19-15. Presentation on beekeeping and model ordinances, and a IFB local and regional food summit debrief. 1-21-16. Ag Outlook 2016, update on farmland protection presentation by County staff at an APA national conference and Food and Farm blog update. 2-18-16. Presentation from Susie Thompson, Illinois FFA State Secretary & updates from Farm to School Program. IL Association of Drainage Ditch Conference update, report from February 17, 2016 Annual Farmers Market Conference and presentation about Regional Planning for Lands in Transition. 3-17-16. Reports on the Farmland Protection Program 15th anniversary & the University of Illinois Horticulture Research Center status. 4-21-16. Ball Horticultural Company presentation, updates from the Plan4Health program and County Export Grant Program. 5-19-16. Food Hub grant opportunities & webinar on Growers experiences selling through food hubs. 6-23-16. Liberty Prairie Foundation report, updates on county food and farm blog & county farmers markets 7-21-16. Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation report & Walmart Foundation State Giving Program 8-18-16. Food to Market Challenge update & the authorization of a new contract with New Venture Advisors, LLC, for food hub project activities and consulting services.

**Winnebago-Boone, "Proposed Rail Project" -** A member contacted the CFB regarding a proposed 280 mile rail project that would significantly affect not only our agricultural industry, but our local communities as well. We immediately contacted IFB. The proposed project affected a total of 7 counties. To assist our members, we created a webpage on our website and posted information on our Facebook page to provide our members the most recent and accurate information available. Our CFB was praised by local county officials and other groups for providing helpful information. The CFB encouraged members and stressed the importance of submitting their comments on the environmental impacts to the Surface Transportation Board (STB). 5 CFB Board members testified at the STB's public scoping hearing on the effects this would have on the agricultural community. The CFB took a position against the proposed rail project and continues to update information as the process moves forward. Over 59 members of the community spoke at the local public scooping hearings.

**Champaign, "Economic Benefits of Agriculture" -** With more development occuring in the county each year, our Land Use Committee felt that perhaps our elected officials needed to look at farmland as a livlihood versus a blank canvas for development. The volunteers looked at some models from Wisconsin and New York on how they presented the value of agriculture to elected officials and the public. Our first step was to reach out to IFB staff and indviduals from the local university for some help in securing current data. We realized that most of the data was old and from the 2007 U.S. Census of agriculture. However, with the help of these two individuals and the recently released 2012 census data, we were able to put together a concise six page document, with charts and graphs. Our Board of Directors then approved the report and we have made numerous presentations on our findings to both the public and our membership. This has been a great way to tell the story of agriculture and it`s value on the counties economy. Our members have also valued this report in that it has helped them in talking within the community on just how much the industry means from an economic development standpoint.

**DuPage, "STEM and Agriculture Roundtable" -** A museum is in the process of trying to construct an Agriculture building with several different Ag exhibits. Being a very urban county, a majority of their donors don't see why they need this type of new building and the exhibits. The Museum decided to hold a roundtable. The museum invited individuals from government, businesses, schools and agriculture. The focus was to hold a discussion on how important STEM was to children today and how agriculture fits into that as well as our urban county. The panel had 9 panelists. The panelists ranged from Presidents of Banks, Superintendents of schools, Curriculum Coordinators, State Treasurer, State Senators, a US Representative, and the Farm Bureau. There were many news channels and newspapers that showed up for the Roundtable.

**Will, "Pipeline" -** We had a major problem with one pipeline that was an oil line that was to be done with their work in September 2015. They were still working well into the harvest and then in December cold weather hit and they had to stop. Our landowners thanked us many times for having a group representation. Issues that arose included: additional agreements that needed to be filled out, new compensation, compaction, field tiles that were not fully fixed only temp fixes and they also had road agreements expire with townships. We had in place a farm specialist and local tile repair people (3 total). The pipeline was to notify these people when they were to inspect and farmers called us in September indicating that the pipeline had filled in the line without inspection as they asked our farm specialist. We quickly stopped the process and had a meeting and then they used the proper people and said it was a miscommunication. It was more than that because the company hired to do the work by the pipeline company tried to hide mistakes and we found them. These were addressed but then in November they discovered (because of us having them dig up areas) that there was leaking from tiles. It was discovered that the coating on the pipe was cracking and they were going to have to re-dig up many connections. Road agreements expired with townships and the pipeline company did not renew them. We had a group attorney and then a litigation attorney and all has been settled with the assistance of 5 more meetings with the landowners and pipeline officials and the roads have all been paid. The project took 14 months longer than expected and we have everyone paid and updated now but it was a hassle. Also we have 10 tiles that have not been totally fixed and because of 17 inches of rain in August. They may not get fixed until October. We had to address weed control, cover crops & additional compensation to roads. It was a total mess but without our involvement it would have been worse. We were also the holder of their performance bond. We were able to get many items addressed that others who did not go along are still dealing with! We are assisting these landowners but their agreement is totally different than the group who had an attorney! This entire process has promoted us to work on solving a problem which is another program in this report.