



Mask extenders being produced.

Foundation, AITC active amid pandemic

With schools closed and students e-learning from home, we have been provided a unique opportunity to think outside the box on Ag In The Classroom programming. RICFB Ag Literacy Coordinator Sheryl Solomonson has put together almost 200 ag bags full of materials on gardening, pork and corn for teachers to use in their e-learning lessons. She also scheduled incubator pickups for teachers who wanted to set up those in their own homes. We have seven classrooms with home incubators. A big THANK YOU to those teachers who have taken on these projects to keep agriculture in their classrooms!

Our biggest project has been using our 3D printer to make face mask extenders for our health care workers. These sit flat on the back of a person's head and have flat hooks on them so they can hook the ties of the face mask to them instead of tying them rubbing behind their ears. Those have been donated to UnityPoint Health Systems in Moline. To date, we have donated 116 extenders and we continue to make more!

If you or anyone you know could use face mask extenders, please reach out to Sheryl at aitc@ricofarmbureau.org.

COVID-19 resources

As we continue to social distance, we'd like to take a minute to thank those who are protecting and supplying our communities in which we live and serve.

To our farmers, health-care workers and support staff, first responders, teachers, food service staff, janitorial staff, grocery staff and management, and truck drivers: THANK YOU!

We'd also like to remind our mem-

bers of the resources available to you with the most up-to-date information:

► IFB COVID-19 Resource page: www.ilfb.org/covid19

► FarmWeekNow: www.farmweeknow.com

► RFD Radio Network: www.farmweeknow.com/rfd_radio

► Quad Cities Disaster Recovery Information: www.qccommunityfoundation.org/qcdasterrecovery

Calendar of Events

MAY – BEEF MONTH

- 6-7 Virtual Manager's Conference
- 12 RICFB Foundation Scholarship Awards Luncheon -- to be rescheduled
- 18 RICFB Board of Directors Meeting

JUNE – DAIRY MONTH

- 9 Farmland Assessment and Flood Debasement program
- 15 RICFB Board of Directors Meeting
- 27 Grain Bin Safety Awareness Program

PLANTING SEASON IS NOW



Drive with caution & help keep farmers safe



Land assessment meetings to cover flood adjustments

Illinois Farm Bureau is partnering with Rock Island and Whiteside County Farm Bureaus to host a farmland assessment meeting in each of their counties. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss increasing property assessments and adjustments due to flooding. The meetings will be held on Tuesday, June 9, at:

► 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. Camden Centre, 2701 1st St E, Milan

► 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. Whiteside County Farm Bureau, 100 E Knox St., Morrison

Due, in part, to a change in the Farmland Assessment Act, all farmland

assessments will continue to go up. The rate of increase will be largely dependent on the soil type. Poorer soils will continue to see higher than 10 percent increases while better-producing soils can expect an increase of less than 10 percent. This increase in assessed values will be reflected on property tax bills payable in 2020 and for several years to come.

Additional information will be provided on the opportunity to receive a flood debasement on those acres that saw crop loss and prevented plant due last year's flooding.

The presentations, given by Brenda

Matherly, director of local government with Illinois Farm Bureau, will give you a better understanding of how farmland assessments are calculated and the long-term impact on those values.

Please keep in mind that depending on social distancing orders, this program could change. We will continue to update our members on the status, but please reach out to our offices if you have questions. To accommodate seating and materials, please pre-register with the Rock Island County Farm Bureau 309-736-7432 or Whiteside County Farm Bureau 815-772-2165 by June 2.

Food waste efforts recognized

LENEXA, Kansas — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized the Food Rescue Partnership with a 2019 Food Recovery Challenge Regional Award on April 23. As part of EPA's Food Recovery Challenge, organizations pledge to improve their sustainable food management practices and report their results.

"Food Recovery Challenge participants are leaders in showing how preventing food waste and diverting excess wholesome food to people is an environmental win and a cost-saving business decision," said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. "Their accomplishments serve as excellent examples to other companies, governments, organizations and communities."

"We applaud the Food Rescue Partnership for their initiative and innovation in reducing food waste throughout the Quad Cities community," said EPA Region 7 Administrator Jim Gulliford. "Thanks to their combined efforts, this community coalition has helped the Quad Cities reduce hunger, save money, and protect the environment by diverting food waste from landfills."

The Food Rescue Partnership is a Quad Cities coalition that promotes rescuing food for its best possible use to achieve a vision of a Quad Cities community dedicated to eliminating food waste. The FRP aims to do so by providing food rescue education and awareness to professional food establishments, retail food stores, and the community at large.

"The Food Rescue Partnership educates local food establishments about food recovery. So it was a natural fit to become an endorser of the EPA Food Recovery Challenge," said FRP Board Director Christina McDonough. "Our local Food Rescue Recognition Program continues to expand."

"There are 17 establishments recognized for their exemplary food recovery efforts that feed hungry people, feed animals, or compost. Through the collaborated efforts of our stakeholders and community partners, the FRP has diverted more than 48,455 pounds of food from the landfill," said McDonough.

The majority of FRP outreach activities and materials have

MORE INFO

► For more information on the Food Recovery Challenge national and regional award winners, visit: www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-challenge-results-and-award-winners

► For more information on the national food loss and waste reduction goal, visit: www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/call-action-stakeholders-united-states-food-loss-waste-2030-reduction

been provided through the volunteerism, in-kind donations, or grants from its stakeholders and community partners. Motivated to spread the food recovery message, FRP stakeholders strategized new and unique marketing opportunities to highlight local establishments participating in food recovery efforts.

In 2018, the FRP worked with Fresh Films and Quad Cities teens to create a video and public service announcement that encouraged local food recovery efforts. The FRP also hosted a second food rescue workshop, toured an anaerobic digestion operation, and facilitated food rescue donations. Through the focused expansion of their communication efforts, the FRP reached various community organizations that are not typically involved in food, waste or hunger relief.

Food is a valuable resource. Efforts to reduce food waste and ensure excess food doesn't go to waste are needed now more than ever. The innovation these businesses are showcasing can serve as examples as the nation works together to address the COVID-19 public health emergency. More than 1,000 businesses, governments and organizations participated in EPA's Food Recovery Challenge in 2019. Participants prevented or diverted over 815,000 tons of food from entering landfills or incinerators, saving participants up to \$42.3 million in avoided landfill tipping fees.

AT THE FARM GATE

Another unprecedented season

By JOANIE STIERS

When the wall calendar changed in January, we looked to the 2020 planting season with anxious optimism. Our family, farm friends and even fields needed a fresh start after 2019. Last year's growing season was brutal, from its unprecedented widespread planting delays and trade wars to a muddy harvest that crept into the month of Christmas.

Then entered the novel coronavirus, a biological threat sweeping the globe and turning lifestyles and economies on their heads. We now begin another historic planting season with challenges beyond our control. As a business deemed essential, farm operations continue, and we stand determined to plant corn and soybeans in a timely manner while mindful of social distancing guidelines.

Hours in the tractor cab naturally

isolate farm families like ours this time of year. We take comfort in this seasonal confinement and the priority task of planting, a welcome distraction from the troubling news of the world. I most enjoy the swift precision of the season. The planting process takes a fraction of the time of harvest and resembles an incredible work of technological art. The tractor drives itself straight and hands-free. The high-tech planter places seed at precise spacing. Automatic sensors adjust ground pressure per planter row to sow seed at uniform depths. Software prescriptions vary the seeding rate with the guidance of global-positioning satellites. That guidance controls automatic row shutoffs on the planter to prevent overlapped planting of seed.

A machinery breakdown and overdue haircuts (even worse than in a normal

spring season) will promptly remind us of the world's issues. With non-essential businesses shut down and essential agribusinesses closed to walk-in traffic, farmers forgo haircuts and order parts by phone to pick up in parking lots. Stresses will elevate if the pandemic infects any of us or the supply chain of parts, fuel, fertilizer, pesticides and other supplies or services necessary to plant crops. That includes grocery pickups to feed the planting crew.

At our farm's grain storage facility, a lighted heart in the scale house window shares the universal message of togetherness and encouragement. It seems we have entered another year when we again hope that changing the calendar brings a better start.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joanie Stiers' family grows corn, soybeans and hay and raises beef cattle in West-Central Illinois.