

Five Year Partnership Report

University of Illinois Extension serving Cook County and the Forest Preserves of Cook County

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

The Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) and University of Illinois Extension (UIE) serving Cook County have a rich partnership that enhances both organizations' goals and objectives. Our agreed upon Scope-of-Work outlines how we serve our aligned missions and visions. Below is a summary of the main aspects of the partnership from the last five years.



FPCC Staff Nina Baki launching a 4-H youth's kayak at Camp Bullfrog



Extension Volunteer Support



Conservation@Home Administration



Event/Program Support



FPCC Staff Development

Extension Volunteer Support:

Top Volunteer Sites by Hours

Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center	2,879
Sand Ridge Nature Center	2,837
Trailside Museum of Natural History/Thatcher	1,953

The Numbers

34,358 volunteer hours
Valued at
\$1,116,530.30*

*estimated value calculated based on annuals rates released by Independent Sector

Master Naturalist Training

UIE Staff have trained 149 new interns, providing at a minimum 8,940 FPCC volunteer hours. This total is inclusive of the 13 FPCC staff who have taken the training since 2020.

Conservation@Home Administration



Initially developed by the Conservation Foundation, Conservation@Home (C@H) encourages homeowners to establish Forest Preserve-friendly landscapes that minimize pollution and negative impacts on the environment while maximizing habitats for native species. Extension staff have delivered 3 unique educational programs each year regarding conservation landscape topics.

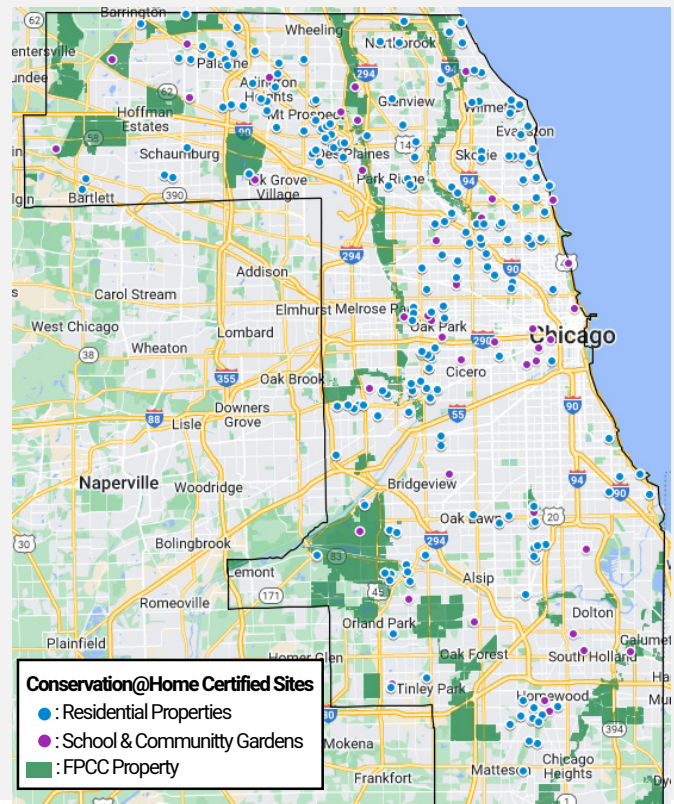
Topics include: Native Landscape Design, Spring Clean-Up, Municipal Codes, Natural Lawn Care, Fall Clean-up, Rainscaping (Rain garden design), Water Conservation, and Native Pollinators.

153 certified sites
279 applicants (2016-2024)

49 school and community gardens
supported and/or certified

2,355 volunteer hours
on evaluations, outreach, and program development

4,749 contacts
through conservation landscape education programming



Event/Program Support

UIE supports a minimum of 12 special events annually as well as additional FPCC staff requests. Beyond the FPCC-hosted events, Extension seeks additional opportunities to work with the Forest Preserves by hosting several programs outside of our agreement. See highlighted Extension events hosted in the preserves below.

9,045 contacts
over the course of
95 special events



UIE Staff Zach Grant providing information to a participant of Produce in the Preserves

Extension Events in the Preserves:



Under the Canopy:

This program is a "pop up" nature center at natural areas across Cook County. Master Naturalists highlight features of the site and provide several educational experiences. Since 2021, UIE has hosted a total of **five events** at Rolling Knolls, Miller Meadows, Eggers Grove, Camp Sullivan, and Chicago Portage reaching **357 participants**.

4-H Summer Camp:

Starting in 2023, UIE 4H staff have worked with FPCC staff to host a four-week day camp and overnight camp in which youth participated in archery, fishing, and kayaking. **Sixty-nine youth** have participated, including many of their families for the overnight camp.



Wellness in the Preserves:

Starting in 2021, Community Health UIE staff started facilitating wellness activities to support health and wellness for Cook County residents. Over 4 years, Yoga in the Preserves has had **408 contacts**. Additionally, staff have facilitated **six wellness walks** serving **31 people**.

Covid Accommodations:

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many special events had to cancel or alter to adhere to health and safety guidelines. Extension responded by providing webpage resources and "take and makes" to support FPCC events such as World Migratory Bird Day, Nature Is Accessible, Live Healthy Discover Nature, and Beaubien Woods Celebration.

FPCC Staff Development

UIE staff offer training and education on topics relevant to FPCC staff. Extension sends quarterly updates on relevant programming and provides expert assistance on projects. Extension also submits and interprets soils samples for FPCC sites when requested. In addition, Extension has offered specific FPCC staff education on Reflecting on Practice, composting, and Green Team webinars.

