December 2025

As we come to the end of 2025, Healthy Champaign County notes the creative and often difficult work that so many of you and your teams did this year. These investments in our neighbors, in our communities make Champaign County a better place to live and thrive. In ways large and small we all have tried to make a difference, this matters in ways we may never fully appreciate. The webs we weave are strong, resilient, and can hold us together. Thank you all. We look forward to working with you for a better 2026!

Future HCC Meetings and Events

Future Membership Gatherings

Wednesday, January 7th, 12:00 Noon - 1:00pm. Martens Center, 1515 N. Market St., Champaign
Wednesday, February 4th, 12:00 Noon - 1:00pm. Martens Center, 1515 N. Market St., Champaign

Next Board Meeting

Monday, January 12th, 9:00am - 12 Noon. Board Retreat. CFECI, 307 W University Ave., Champaign
Wednesday, January 28th, 8:30am - 9:30am. OSF Medical Center, 1400 W Park St. Conference Room C (right inside front entrance to the left)

Editor's Note: Given the number of events and announcements, and to experiment with the newsletter format, flyers promoting events have been collected and stored on Google Drive. If an event has such a flyer, you will find an icon 💼 next to the announcement. The icon has a link that will take you to the specific flyer or announcement. Let me know what you think of this innovation. Ric

Coming Events and Opportunities with Participating Organizations

- **Help Wanted - Food Access Specialist**: The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) is seeking a full-time Food Access Specialist. The selected candidate will play a vital role in coordinating and strengthening food access initiatives throughout Champaign County. The Specialist serves as a central connector, helping align strategies, identify service gaps, and mobilize resources to improve equitable access to nutritious, affordable food. This position will also support community engagement and sustainability planning to advance a shared vision of food equity across Champaign County. This position has its roots in Feeding Champaign County Food Summit conversations - HCC helped make this possible. Check it out HERE.

- **Feeding Champaign County Food Summit**: The 2026 Food Summit will be held on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at the I Hotel and Conference Center in Champaign, IL. This gathering will bring together community members, growers, nonprofit leaders, students, researchers, and professors to share knowledge and spark new ideas around addressing food insecurity in Champaign County. You are invited to participate in the conversation by presenting a Poster. Share your research, project, or community initiative in a visual format. You can also submit a proposal to lead a breakout session during the Food Summit. Poster and breakout session proposal forms are on the HCC Website. The submission deadline is January 9th, 2026. This is a valuable opportunity to showcase your work, exchange ideas, and connect with others committed to building a more equitable food system. If you have any questions, reach out to the workgroup members Rachel Mannen or Tracy Bowden.

- **Christie Clinic Illinois Race Weekend**: HCC is excited to be a Charity Running Partner for the Christie Clinic Illinois Race Weekend, April 23-25, 2026. Whether you're a member of HCC or just want to support the work HCC is doing in the community, join Team HCC when you register to run any of the Race Weekend events. You

can also donate to team HCC and volunteer with us during Race Weekend. Send us an email if you have any questions. #CCIRW2026 #teamHCC @illinoismarathon

- **Buy One Give One:** The Land Connection is asking shoppers at the Winter Farmers Market at Lincoln Square to purchase additional items when they visit participating vendors. TLC will collect those items and deliver them to the Friends of Champaign County Food Pantry for immediate distribution.

- **Morrissey Park parkrun**: Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. at Morrissey Park, 1209 Harrington Dr., Champaign. Parkrun is a fun and friendly 5K event. Walk, jog, run, roll, volunteer, or come to cheer on participants. Parkrun is free, but please register before you first come along. Volunteers are encouraged, send an email to morrisseypark@parkrun.com to learn more.

- **Host Health and Kinesiology Interns:** This is an opportunity for HCC participants to host partners for HK 471 Community Health Internships. HCC members interested in hosting interns should contact Caitlin Clarke for additional information.

- **December Kids Kits - Pizza Bagels:** This month, The Land Connection will be serving up a kid-friendly recipe featuring fresh and local ingredients from Good Judy's Espresso & Bagel Bar, Kountry Fresh & Koss Family Farms, and Berries & Flour! Pick up your **FREE** kit from the Champaign Urbana Winter Farmers Market on December 20th from 8:00am-12:00pm (or until supplies last!)

- **Winter Nights at Prairie Farm:** Champaign Park District invites you to visit Winter Nights at Prairie Farm! Enjoy festive lights and savor complimentary hot chocolate to keep you cozy. Fresh air and neighbors make this a great night out! Thursday-Sunday, Nov 28–Dec 28, 5-9pm, Prairie Farm, 2202 W Kirby Ave. Champaign. Free too!

HCC Partners in the News

- **CU Food Pantry Meets Unprecedented Demand.** Learn how Windsor Road Christian Church's Free Food Store served 100 families in 30 minutes. Featured in the Daily Illini.
- **Congressmember Nikki Budzinsk** visited with folks from The Land Connection and CUPDH to learn about the effects of the latest cuts to SNAP. Featured on WCIA.

News from Around the USA

- **With Hunger on the Rise, Urban Gleaners Seek to Strengthen Local Food Security**. Amid escalating food costs and cuts to food assistance, collecting surplus food offers an age-old solution.
- **'Food Insecurity' and Other Words That Sanitize Poverty.** Too often, poverty can seem like an abstract concept — something to analyze rather than experience. That's partly because the language used to describe poverty drains it of urgency. Hunger is "food insecurity." Eviction is "housing instability." Poverty itself is "economic vulnerability." These are terms of art, not human ones. They make survival sound like a strategy and turn suffering into a statistic. Over time, this language persuades some that poverty is a problem faced by others, not by family members, neighbors, or colleagues.
- **Defining "Just Transition" in Agrifood Systems**. What a more clearly articulated, though still evolving, definition of a just transition means for agrifood systems. This definition reflects the numerous complexities, actors, and challenges that are unique to agriculture and other forms of food production across different scales and regions. A new conceptualization of a just transition in agrifood systems may be a transformational shift from the inequitable and unsustainable models of production, distribution and consumption that characterize today's global agrifood systems, to ones that are ecologically grounded.
- **U.S. Inspections of Foreign Food Facilities Hit New Low.** American inspections of foreign food facilities have plummeted to historic lows this year. This stark reduction marks a dramatic shift in

oversight at a time when the United States has never been more dependent on foreign food, which accounts for the vast majority of the nation's seafood and more than half its fresh fruit. 💼

- **How to Actually Feed America**. Good intentions matter, but good systems turn generosity into abundance. Twenty years ago, Feeding America decided to try something different. And the story of that experiment begins at the University of Chicago, which is not where you might instinctively look for anti-hunger policy ideas, but is a place unusually well equipped to think about allocation problems. 💼
- **How Connected do Americans Feel to Their Neighbors?** Americans differ over what their ideal community looks like. But wherever they live, most have neighbors, whether they're sharing a wall in an apartment building or living several miles down the road. In a March 2025 survey, The Pew Research Center asked people whether they are likely to do things for their neighbors that might build community ties – and whether they think their neighbors would do the same things for them. 💼
- **How Urban Orchards Improve a Community's Access to Fresh, Healthy Food.** There are now almost 7,000 school gardens stretching across the U.S. by last formal count. Largely left out of the school-food equation, though, have been tree fruits and nuts. A Maine-based program has planted more than 100 orchards, ranging in size from 10 to 100 trees, in schoolyards. 💼
- **What We Lose as USDA Household Food Security Reporting Ends. In** a major policy shift by the US Department of Agriculture they have discontinued the US Household Food Security report. For nearly 30 years, this report has been crucial in measuring food insecurity among US households. Learn how this shift impacts data-driven decision-making in policy, research, and community practices, and what steps can be taken to ensure continuity in understanding food insecurity. 💼

Newsletter Publication Schedule: We aspire to publish this newsletter on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. Submissions for inclusion must be received by the 2nd Wednesday. Send submissions to HealthyChampaignCounty2016@gmail.com.

This information has been provided by **Healthy Champaign County** (HCC), a coalition of organizations and community members working to ensure opportunities for active living and accessible, nutritional food for all our neighbors in Champaign County.

Learn more about Health Champaign County









If you wish to be added or removed from this mailing list, send a message to HealthyChampaignCounty2016@gmail.com.