



ECOLOGY
ACTION CENTER



2020 ANNUAL
REPORT



The Ecology Action Center is a not-for-profit environmental agency with a mission to inspire and assist our community in creating, strengthening, and preserving a healthy environment. The EAC acts as a central resource for environmental education, information, outreach, and technical assistance in McLean County.

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A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I normally use this space to talk about the challenges faced by the Ecology Action Center in the past year. It is a familiar, yet useful, formula as I recall the significant changes, the unanticipated struggles, the growth and adaptation in response, the lessons learned in the end, and the benefits gained in moving forward. It is an understatement to say that all years prior paled in comparison to 2020.

It was literally the night before the statewide shutdown per Governor Pritzker's Executive Order that the EAC staff gathered for the last time to say our goodbyes to Education Coordinator Molly McCready, who was moving to Colorado, and to welcome Jen Gravley, who was newly hired to fill the role. It was a fun but odd gathering as we wondered what lay ahead—how bad would the pandemic get? How close to home would it hit? How long would we be in “stay-at-home” mode? How would we do our work as the Ecology Action Center—something that has been dependent on in-person programs, presentations, workshops, and events for nearly five decades?

It's a year later, and now we know the answers to most of these questions. A lot has changed—everywhere, for everyone. Most of us know people who contracted COVID-19; some of us lost close friends or family. The pandemic is not over, but it is showing signs of receding as vaccination numbers increase. Not unlike the rest of the community, the EAC dealt with the pandemic through creativity and collaboration—working together to come up with new and interesting ways to reach and engage local residents while working remotely and doing our best to keep everyone safe.

And yet despite all of the changes, so much has stayed the same. Recycling markets continue to face challenges and contamination of recycling continues to be problematic. Water quality improvement and air quality improvement continue to be critical to improving public health. Improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources continue to be high priorities to increase environmental sustainability. Despite an unmatched drop in transportation emissions as much of the world shut down, we still face an unprecedented climate crisis that threatens to change everything—EVERYTHING.



EAC staff say goodbye to Molly McCready the night before a state disaster proclamation was issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“

...the EAC dealt with the pandemic through creativity and collaboration—working together to come up with new and interesting ways to reach and engage local residents while working remotely and doing our best to keep everyone safe.

”

I recently heard someone describe the COVID-19 pandemic and our response to it as a warm-up for dealing with climate change and adapting to a rapidly changing climate. The challenge ahead of us will again make current and past challenges all seem minor in comparison. Creativity and collaboration are critical for success in community-wide, regional, national, and ultimately international efforts to reduce carbon emissions to avoid the most significant climate shifts and are equally important to prepare our communities for the coming shifts that we are too late to avoid.

Late in 2020, the EAC launched two brand-new initiatives that can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions: BN Community Composting and the Tree Corps. The former is detailed on page 12 in this report. The latter will have to wait for our 2021 Annual Report—or you can check out the latest at Tree-Corps.org.

We continue to learn lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, and we continue to aim high to do our best for local sustainable communities. But like so much else, we know this is a group effort. We are grateful for your ongoing support and look forward to continuing to work together to address current and new challenges for many, many years to come.

Probably the biggest lesson I have learned this year is about the importance of family, friends, and community. I've been reminded how critical these relationships are and to never take a hug for granted.

Be safe, be well, and be well-prepared,



Michael Brown
Executive Director





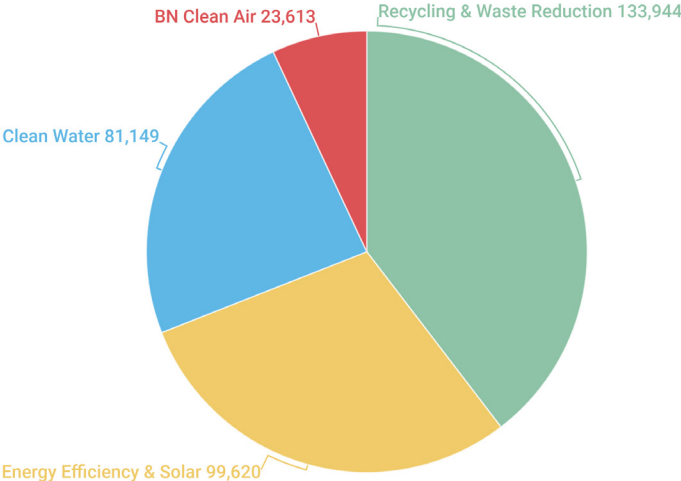
EDUCATION & OUTREACH

The Ecology Action Center provides:

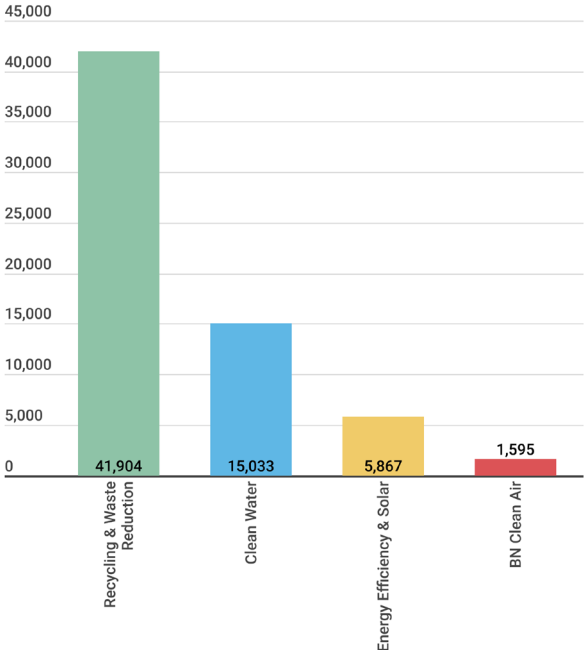
- Solid waste education to fulfill the Illinois Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act requirements for McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal;
- Storm water education to meet the public education requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Phase II Storm Water Management Plans for Bloomington, Normal, McLean County, and the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District;
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy education and outreach for Bloomington and Normal, including residential and small business energy assessments;
- Air quality data through our greenhouse gas emissions inventory process and the development of a Community Energy Strategic Plan to reduce emissions; and
- Distribution of resources on numerous sustainability topics.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

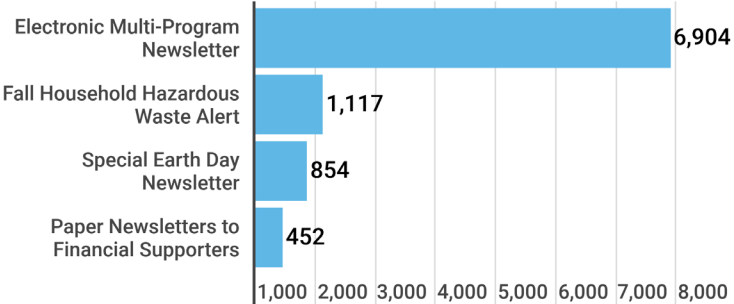
Social media impressions



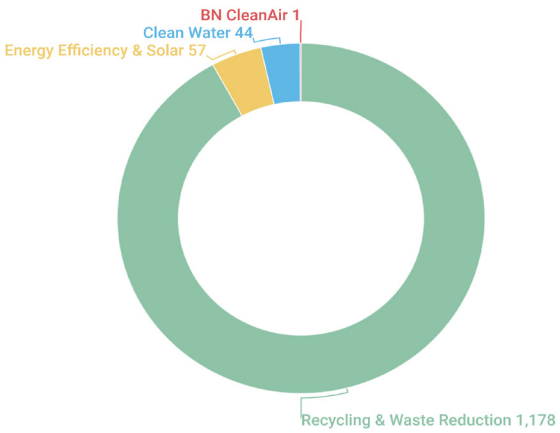
EAC website visits



Electronic and paper newsletters were received by 9,327 people



Inquiries answered by phone, email, and in person



In 2020, the EAC visited 10 schools, including 29 classrooms, and held 24 Elementary Online programs, reaching a total of 822 kids. Some youth education programs featured messaging on both waste reduction and clean water.





IN THE COMMUNITY

The Ecology Action Center actively shares information with residents and businesses by participating in various events, from workplace health and wellness fairs to community-wide events.

During the pandemic, the EAC had to find creative ways to reach our community since many community events had been canceled or postponed.

Staff worked diligently to reach residents virtually, creating new events such as a special online Earth Day experience and new online programming for youth.

IN 2020:

The EAC promoted waste reduction and recycling, clean water, and energy efficiency and solar programs and initiatives at numerous in-person and virtual community events.

Waste Reduction & Recycling:

- Presentation on recycling to the Homeschool Co-Op Group
- Virtual presentation on the future of solid waste management and recycling to the ISU Careers Chat
- Virtual presentation on composting to the Bloomington Normal Boys & Girls Club
- “Recycling Right” presentation for University High School’s Earth Club

Clean Water

- Weekly presentations on water stewardship practices for seven-week Miller Park Zoo Zoosday after-school program
- Spoke to two Epiphany Jr. High classes about watershed health and clean water programs
- Presentation on sources of water pollution and watershed health for Tri-Valley sixth-grade classes
- Hosted an information table at Home, Lawn and Garden Day to promote Yard Smart, rain barrels, and composting

Energy Efficiency & Solar

- Discussion on solar options for the Bloomington Hindu Temple
- Presentation on the importance of clean energy to sixth-grade students at the Challenger Learning Center
- Spoke at the McLean County State of the Environment Webinar and an Earth Day webinar hosted by StraightUp Solar
- Spoke to the IWU Senior Seminar class about environmental justice and energy efficiency
- Hosted an information table at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore on Illinois Solar for All, solar options, and energy supply rights

Youth activities



Nature scavenger hunt

Distributed at Children's Discovery Museum's Day of Play to 1,000 households reaching approximately 4,000 residents.



Choose to Reuse worksheet

Handed out by the Back 2 School Alliance to 3,000 K-8 youth.

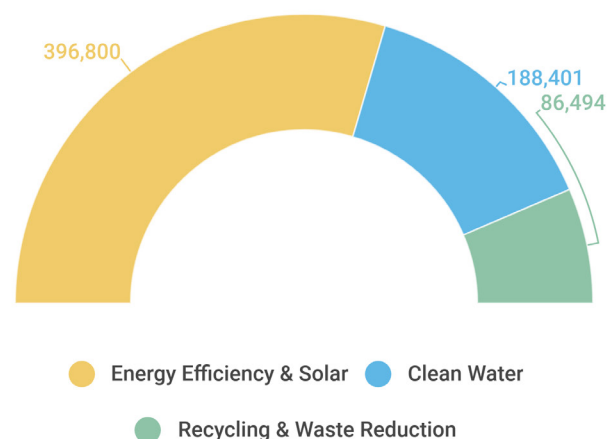


Sorting Boss Toss-Across game

Provided to 155 students in the School Summer Feeding Program.

Media reach by topic

The EAC's extensive media outreach includes newspaper ads, radio commercials, and direct newspaper and radio interviews to share information, spread awareness, and promote upcoming events or initiatives.





ELEMENTARY ONLINE

The Ecology Action Center launched two weekly online programs to help kids learn and stay connected during the summer of 2020: Wonder Ears Book Club and Watershed Down Storymakers. These Elementary Online programs, in addition to other online presentations, reached 180 students about solid waste programs and 36 students about clean water programming.



THE WONDER EARS BOOK CLUB

Wonder Ears Book Club is a read-aloud experience intended for children ages 5-12. The program featured a new book each week, read aloud by our Education Coordinator Jen. Books covered topics such as recycling, clean water, ecosystem protection, and energy conservation. Like most book clubs, participants discussed the reading afterward, relating the characters' plights and actions to their own experiences and sharing new ideas about how they can protect and enjoy our environment.



WATERSHED DOWN STORYMAKERS

Watershed Down Storymakers is a live online program geared toward kids ages 7-12, giving them a chance to play detective, converse with the animals, explore and even augment an imaginary landscape as they investigated real-world issues that affect our watersheds like litter and poor water quality. This choose-your-own-adventure experience engaged youths with a knack for solving problems or embellishing a story, while creating a sense of working together to protect and preserve the environment.

Program Facts

Student participation in these programs totaled 73 engagements, including regular attendees and occasional participants, with an additional 81 views of our pre-recorded Wonder Ears Book Club readings.

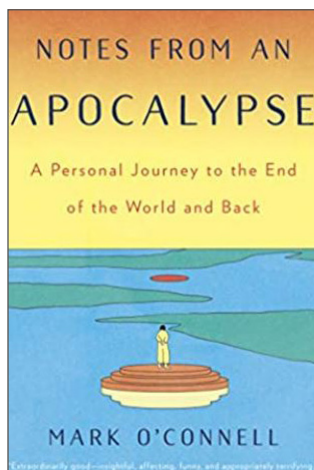
GREEN READS BOOK CLUB

The EAC launched Green Reads, our first community-wide book club, in April 2020 in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and as a way to build community during the pandemic.

The purpose of Green Reads is to create opportunities to build knowledge, deepen commitments, and take further action to protect clean water, improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency, and reduce waste for a more sustainable and healthy local environment for all.

We had four different sessions in 2020 where small groups of six to 10 people gathered online to talk about the subject matter in the books we selected. We tried to find books that covered important topics of climate change and environmental justice from diverse perspectives. Participants found joy and solace in the virtual gathering space and found the conversations meaningful, enlightening, and sometimes difficult and overwhelming.

Between April and December we read...



***Notes from the Apocalypse: A Personal Journey to the End of the World and Back* | Mark O'Connell**

“How is a person supposed to live in the shadow of such a grim future? What does it mean to have children in such unsettled times? What might it be like to live through the worst? And what on Earth is anybody doing about it?”

In *Notes from an Apocalypse*, Dublin-based writer Mark O'Connell crosses the globe in pursuit of answers. In doing so, he comes to a resolution, while offering readers a unique window into our contemporary imagination.”

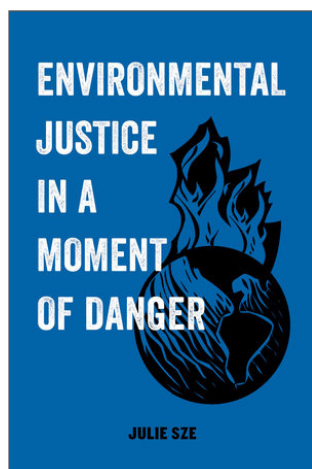
Participate in Green Reads

Community members can participate in Green Reads in two ways:

1. Join the discussion in our Green Reads Facebook group
2. Register for one of our online small-group discussions

Green Reads is continuing in 2021, and may evolve into an in-person book club when it is safe to gather.

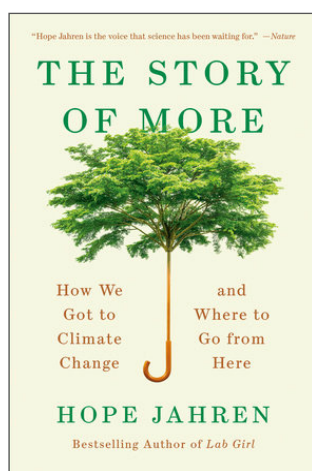
Learn more at ecologyactioncenter.org/green-reads-book-club



***Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger* | Julie Sze**

“This book examines mobilizations and movements, from protests at Standing Rock to activism in Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria. Environmental justice movements fight, survive, love, and create in the face of violence that challenges the conditions of life itself.

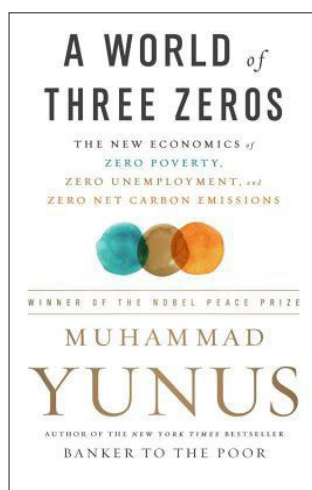
Exploring dispossession, deregulation, privatization, and inequality, this book is the essential primer on environmental justice, packed with cautiously hopeful stories for the future.”



***The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where We Go from Here* | Hope Jahren**

“Hope Jahren illuminates the link between human habits and our imperiled planet. She explains the current and projected consequences of global warming—from superstorms to rising sea levels—and the actions that we all can take to fight back.

At once an explainer on the mechanisms of global change and a lively, personal narrative given to us in Jahren’s inimitable voice, *The Story of More* is the essential pocket primer on climate change that will leave an indelible impact on everyone who reads it.”



***A World of Three Zeroes: New Economics of Zero Poverty, Zero Unemployment, and Zero Carbon Emissions* | Muhammed Yunus**

“Muhammad Yunus declares it’s time to admit that the capitalist engine is broken—that in its current form it inevitably leads to rampant inequality, massive unemployment, and environmental destruction. We need a new economic system that unleashes altruism as a creative force just as powerful as self-interest.

Is this a pipe dream? Not at all. In the last decade, thousands of people and organizations have already embraced Yunus’s vision of a new form of capitalism, launching innovative social businesses designed to serve human needs rather than accumulate wealth.”



RECYCLING & WASTE REDUCTION

The Ecology Action Center is the solid waste agency for McLean County, the City of Bloomington, and the Town of Normal, and receives funding through the McLean County Solid Waste Fund.

The EAC helps residents and businesses reduce waste, increase recycling, and properly dispose of hazardous waste through numerous educational and

outreach programs such as our Recycle Coach app and fourth-grade recycling classroom programs, and at local events like our biennial Household Hazardous Waste Collection.

We continue to provide education on backyard composting, and in 2020 we opened our first drop-off kiosk to launch a new BN Community Compost program.

COUNTY RECYCLING RATE

As the community’s solid waste agency, the EAC annually collects waste and recycling data to calculate the amount of municipal solid waste generated and recycled for all of McLean County. The information gathered serves as a lagging performance indicator of the success of outreach programs on waste generation and recycling. The performance indicator is limited but does help guide the EAC’s efforts to improve the county’s recycling rate and increase source reduction.

McLean County maintained a steady recycling rate in 2019. The Ecology Action Center’s annual calculation of community-wide waste generation and recycling shows that the County maintained a recycling rate of 46% with no significant change compared to 2018. As a result, the County maintained progress made in the preceding three years, including breaking the previous community-wide recycling goal of 40% and maintaining progress made toward the new community-wide recycling rate goal of 50% set in 2017 under the new Twenty-Year Materials Recovery and Resource Management Plan for McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal, Illinois. No single category of recyclable materials saw significant fluctuations from the year prior, while there were minor fluctuations across the board in all material streams.

With the closure of the McLean County Landfill in late 2018, the Ecology Action Center continues to focus on waste management priorities as outlined in the twenty-year solid waste management plan. This includes diversion strategies for waste that would otherwise require landfill disposal further away from the source of origin.

McLean County Waste Generation and Recycling Rates: 2014-2019

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total MSW Recycled (tons)	85,196	81,302	83,335	88,459	94,804	88,330
Total MSW Landfilled (tons)	141,068	154,662	120,815	124,364	109,467	104,772
Total Municipal Solid Waste Generated (tons)	226,264	235,964	204,150	211,230	204,271	193,102
Recycling Rate	37.7%	34.5%	40.8%	41.9%	46.4%	45.7%



BN COMMUNITY COMPOST

The EAC's Twenty-year Materials Recovery and Resource Management Plan for McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal, Illinois was approved by all three governing bodies in early 2018. The plan highlighted six key strategies with strong potential for significant impact on increased waste recovery, meaning the potential to keep these items out of the landfill. Organics/food waste recycling or composting was one of the identified areas with deficient recovery rates.

Food scraps make up the bulk of landfilled organics and participation in backyard composting to reduce the amount of food waste in our landfill is minimal. For several

years, Midwest Fiber offered a commercial food waste composting service that transported waste first to Illinois State's University Farm in Lexington, and then to Better Earth Compost in Bartonville, south of Peoria.

In 2015, Better Earth Logistics took over the commercial composting service in partnership with Better Earth Compost, and more recently they added a community compost service. The first kiosk was located in Peoria, and when the Ecology Action Center heard about the success of this new program, staff went to work to make it a possibility here in Bloomington-Normal.



With support from Better Earth Logistics, Normandy Village, Zimmerman & Armstrong Investment Advisors, and George and Myra Gordon, the EAC procured its first community compost kiosk which opened for business at Normandy Village in Normal in November 2020.

Participation in the program is easy—you simply purchase a starter kit for \$20.99 from the EAC that includes a 5-gallon bucket, compostable liners, instructions, and a key card to access the drop bin. Then you start collecting your organic waste, and when your bucket is full, you can empty it at the kiosk and begin again. After the initial kit purchase, the cost of participation is limited to the purchase of additional compostable bags for \$16.50 from the EAC, with all service and disposal costs built into the price of the bags.

The BN Community Composting program allows residents to divert all of their food waste from the landfill, along with other organic materials.

Starter kits for the program flew out the door in November! Feedback about the program has been overwhelmingly positive, and the EAC is working to set up a second compost kiosk in Bloomington at AB Hatchery. EAC staff are excited to see how much organic material this new program diverts from our landfill!



Program Facts

The BN Community Composting program allows residents to divert all of their food waste from the landfill, along with other organic materials.

What can you compost with your subscription?

- Food scraps and leftovers, including fruits and vegetables, meats, prepared foods, dairy, bones, grains, etc.
- Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI)-certified compostable packaging and containers
- Paper towels, paper napkins, and uncoated paper plates
- Greasy pizza boxes

For more information about the program including details on how to purchase your compost starter kit, or to find out how to sponsor a next kiosk for our community, visit BNCommunityComposting.org.

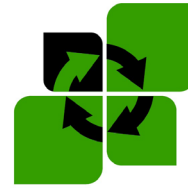


RECYCLE COACH

Recycle Coach is the web and mobile app the Ecology Action Center uses to help residents get up-to-date information on waste and recycling options in the community.

Recycle Coach provides geographic-specific answers on curbside, drop-off, traditional, and non-traditional recycling programs, in addition to customized optional reminders of collection days, hazardous waste collection events, and more. The mobile app is available at no cost to all residents on Android or Apple smartphones, and the web version of the app is available at RecycleBN.org.

recyclecoach™



RECYCLEBN.ORG

During 2020:

- Recycle Coach had 8,674 users
- Users completed 285,673 interactions

[Learn more at RecycleBN.org.](http://RecycleBN.org)

McLean County Freecycle Site

The EAC serves as the administrator of McFreecycle, a free online listserv that facilitates the free exchange of materials within McLean County to avoid disposal of usable items. There are 1,741 current members with an estimated average of 30 messages exchanged monthly.



Usage of the service appears to be declining, likely due to numerous free-item services now available as a part of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Nextdoor.

In response to this trend, the EAC has developed guidance for the free exchange of materials using these additional platforms, and continues to provide support for community opportunities to keep usable items out of the landfill.

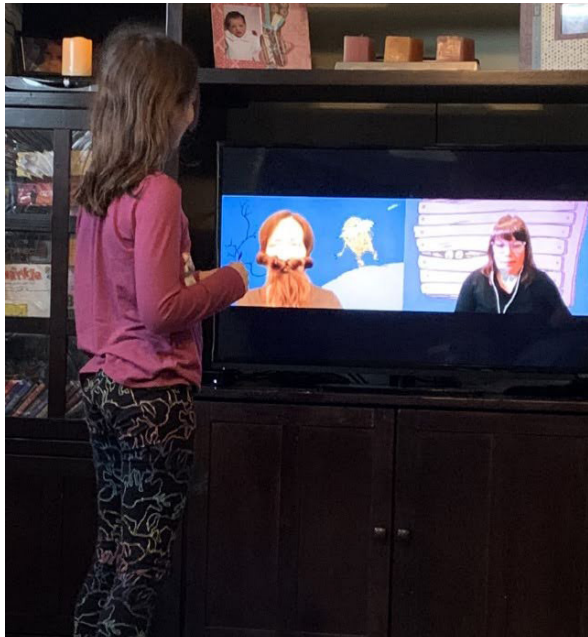
EARTH DAY LIVE



April 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, but we were also still operating under Illinois' stay-at-home orders so EAC staff worked hard to put together thoughtful online programming to celebrate the environment together with our community.

During the morning of Earth Day, we hosted a McLean County State of the Environment panel webinar to discuss the past, present, and future of Earth Day in our own community. We spoke with local experts working in a variety of environmental fields including Shannon Fulton with StraightUp Solar, Krista Kirkham with Nature Conservancy, Todd Shumaker with Midwest Fiber, and Terra Brockman with Brockman Family Farms.

During the evening, we hosted a family-friendly Earth Day Live event on Facebook Live and YouTube so families could watch with us from home. We kicked things off with staff sharing the story of *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. That was followed with a fun slideshow of all the wonderful environmental activities our community participates in on a regular basis featuring pictures from the Ecology Action Center archives and photos residents sent in of themselves enjoying our local environment. The slideshow was accompanied by fiddle music from Bruce Bergethon.



We had 132 participants attend the event on Facebook Live, and the YouTube video was viewed over 1,800 times. An additional 734 people have watched the video on Facebook since its initial airing. Many local residents sent us pictures of their family joining the event from home, and it was a wonderful way for all of us to stay engaged and celebrate together while we remained apart!



CLEAN WATER

The Ecology Action Center educates the community about the negative impacts of storm water runoff pollution and provides information and resources to help people reduce their contributions to water pollution.

The EAC promotes clean water protection and watershed awareness through education and outreach programs including

programs for all third-grade classrooms in McLean County, the Yard Smart program, storm drain stenciling, the mCLEANwater.org watershed clearinghouse website, rain barrel workshops, an annual creek and trail clean-up event, the Sugar Creek Stewards, septic system maintenance messaging, and reminding our community to curb their leaves in the fall!

YARD SMART GARDEN WALK

The EAC shifted gears for many of our programs to accommodate state shut-down requirements and to ensure the safety of our staff and community. Instead of our traditional in-person garden walk, the EAC hosted our first Virtual Yard Smart Garden Walk on July 22.

Staff spent a lot of time going out to different gardens in the community to film content ahead of time. This format facilitated more in-depth and intimate conversations with the garden owners about their practices and allowed us to show spaces outside of town that would not be on a typical garden walk.

The pre-filmed tours featured a home garden in Bloomington, a home garden in Normal, the West Washington Street Mom's Orchard, the Refuge Food Forest, and a large restored prairie home garden near Secor. We also featured a tutorial on proper mowing techniques from the City of Bloomington Parks Department staff.

The video tour was followed by a live Zoom panel discussion featuring guests from the City of Bloomington Parks Department, the Nature Conservancy, and Illinois Prairie Wild Ones. Panelists discussed the work they do and how it relates to clean water and environmental conservation, and then took questions from the audience. The event was broadcast on Zoom for pre-registered participants and was streamed live on the EAC's Facebook page.

The Zoom event was attended by 102 registrants and additional 604 watched on Facebook Live, and 39 people viewed the event after it was posted on YouTube.



SUGAR CREEK STEWARDS

Sugar Creek Stewards is designed to raise awareness about Sugar Creek as an important community storm water system and ecosystem. The EAC works with volunteers at designated sites to improve the overall health and aesthetics of Sugar Creek through invasive species control and removal, allowing native species to thrive. We have workdays on the third Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to noon.

In Bloomington, we worked along the creek near the north side of Ewing II park. We held four workdays there in 2020 with a total of 18 volunteers who helped us remove large quantities of honeysuckle and other woody invasive brush and seed



native shade tolerant seeds into previously cleared areas.

In Normal, we worked along the creek that runs through Fairview Park, focusing on the north end of the creek. We held two workdays there with a total of seven volunteers who helped remove honeysuckle and teasel heads and spread prairie plant seeds in cleared areas.

Workdays were put on hold from March through June per the stay-at-home order.

RAIN BARRELS



The EAC typically offers build-your-own rain barrel workshops for residents. However, due to pandemic constraints we were unable to offer this service during 2020. To ensure residents were still able to receive proper rain barrel installation and usage information, we began production of a series of rain barrel tutorial videos.

Staff also created an online store where residents could purchase pre-built rain barrels. EAC staff delivered them to residents in Bloomington and Normal at no additional cost. A total of 31 EAC-built rain barrels were distributed in this manner.

The EAC also partnered with the West Bloomington Revitalization Project to install rain barrels for seven west Bloomington residents. The WBRP provided funds for the rain barrels and the EAC installed the rain barrels and educated residents on the benefits, proper usage, and winter storage.


ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP

The EAC annually holds a spring Constitution Trail and Sugar Creek clean-up day in April, but staff had to come up with an alternative for 2020.

Buckets filled with trash grabbers and garbage bags were placed outside the back door of the Ecology Action Center building, and staff encouraged residents to spend time outdoors picking up litter with their housemates.

Many residents were going on regular walks during the beginning of the pandemic as a safe activity. Those who utilized the EAC-provided materials were grateful to have an opportunity to safely pick up and dispose of litter they would see on their walks!

Picking up litter in our neighborhoods helps protect our local watersheds by preventing that waste from being washed into storm drains.



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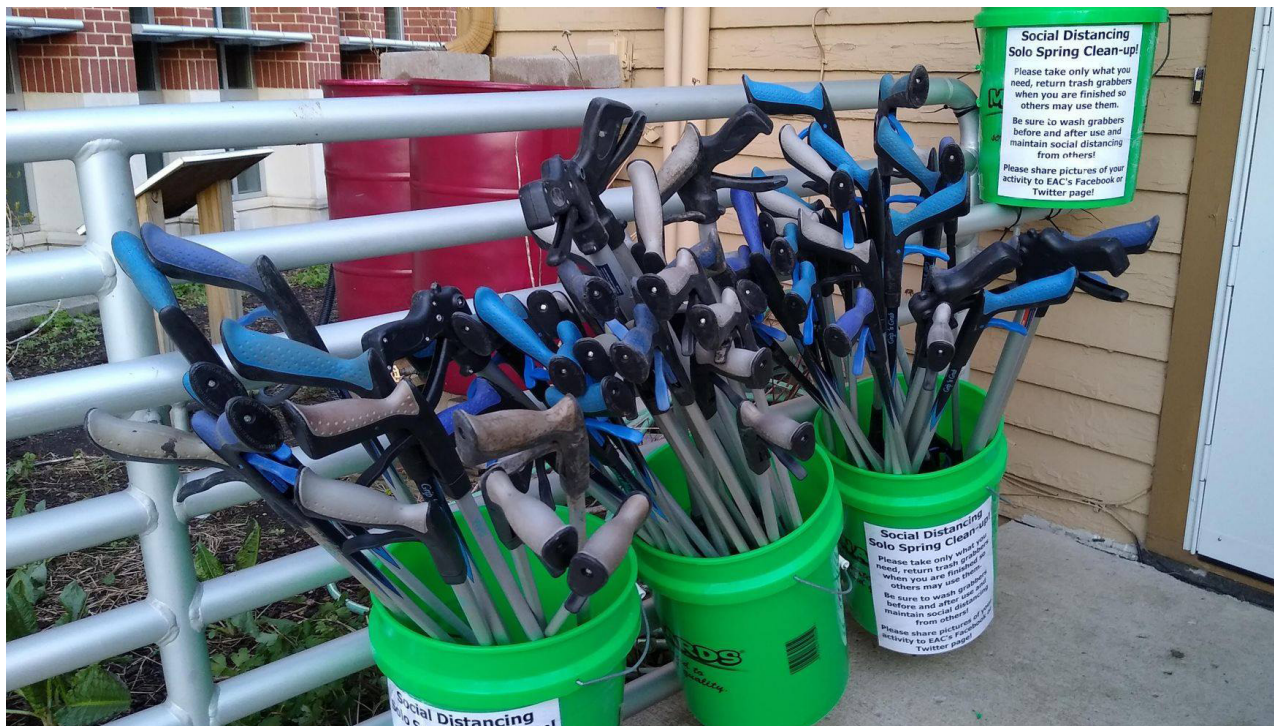
If you want to do some neighborhood clean-up with your housemates when you're out on **#SocialDistancingStrolls** - borrow a trash-grabber from the EAC! You can pick one up by our backdoor (be sure to sanitize before use, and when you return it). Picking up litter and throwing it in the garbage helps keep our storm drains clear which helps keep our local waterways clean! **#WatershedWednesday**

Edit

30 1 Comment 6 Shares

Sarah Brent
Awesome!! This is just what we need. The trail goes past our backyard and we watch people litter every day. We've been wanting to go clean it up but also don't want to touch people's trash right now. We'll definitely pick up a couple this week to use!

Like · Reply · Message · 1y 2

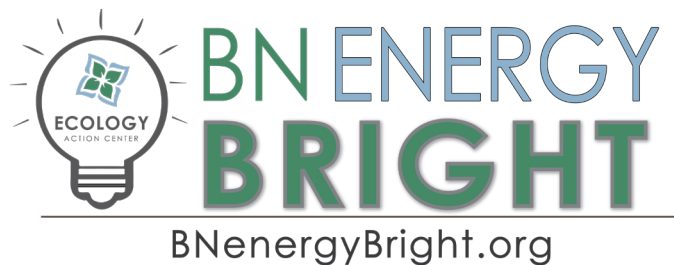




ENERGY

BN Energy Bright is a community energy program designed to increase energy efficiency for homes and businesses in Bloomington-Normal through professional low-cost energy assessments, personalized assessment reports for participants, and through a variety of educational information in the form of presentations, outreach events, and a comprehensive website.

BN Energy Bright is in partnership with the Town of Normal and the City of Bloomington, in conjunction with their municipal aggregation program, to help further reduce the community's overall energy demand.



In 2020, the EAC offered virtual energy audit services. While the pandemic had an impact this program, we still completed 10 home energy audits in Bloomington and Normal and provided detailed energy efficiency consultations for an additional 57 households.



67

home energy consultations



\$5,550

total estimated energy savings of all participating households in 2020



787

people reached through presentations, events, and phone inquiries



1.6M

people reached through media coverage, ads, social media, and the EAC website

BN Energy Bright has reached over 854 members of the community through presentations, events, phone inquiries, and home energy consultations, and reached community members 1,598,033 times through media coverage, advertisements, social media, and our website.

Based on figures from the Department of Energy, if residents implement the majority of the easier to accomplish efficiency recommendations (sealing air leaks, setting thermostat back 7-10 degrees for eight hours a day, replacing frequently used light fixtures with LED bulbs, lower water heating temperature, insulating hot water pipes

and the heater tank) they can save a low estimate of \$555 annually on energy costs. Using these figures, participating households will cumulatively save as much as \$5,550 in the first year after implementation of recommended energy saving measures.

The average Illinois household uses 129 million BTUs of energy per year. Based on the energy equivalents of the monetary savings estimates above, implementing the basic efficiency recommendations means a savings of 34.6 million BTUs per household. This is the equivalent to removing 3.7 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per household.



In 2020, the EAC offered virtual energy audit services. While the pandemic had an impact this program, we still completed 10 home energy audits in Bloomington and Normal and provided detailed energy efficiency consultations for an additional 57 households.



ILLINOIS SOLAR FOR ALL

The Ecology Action Center was selected as one of 10 non-profits in Illinois to be the first cohort of grassroots educators for the Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA) program. ILSFA is part of the state’s Future Energy Jobs Act designed to increase access to solar energy for low-income residents, environmental justice communities, and non-profits and public facilities that serve low-income communities. The first program year ran from June 2019 through May 2020. In 2020, the EAC wrapped up activities from the first program year and was also selected to be part of the grassroots education cohort for the 2020-2021 program year from July 2020 to June 2021.

The EAC worked hard to reach eligible residents during the pandemic through flyers and online information sessions held by non-profit partners such as Habitat for Humanity and the Normal Township Activity and Recreation Center. The EAC reached over 8,000 residents through these outreach efforts.



ILSFA Outreach Success

As a direct result of the EAC’s grassroots education efforts for ILSFA, the Habitat ReStore, Normal Township Activity and Recreation Center, Wayman AME Baptist Church, and Christ Church will all receive solar installations in 2021 at no upfront cost to them, with monthly payments that cannot exceed 50% of the energy’s value. These projects total over 356kW of new solar added to the Bloomington-Normal community.

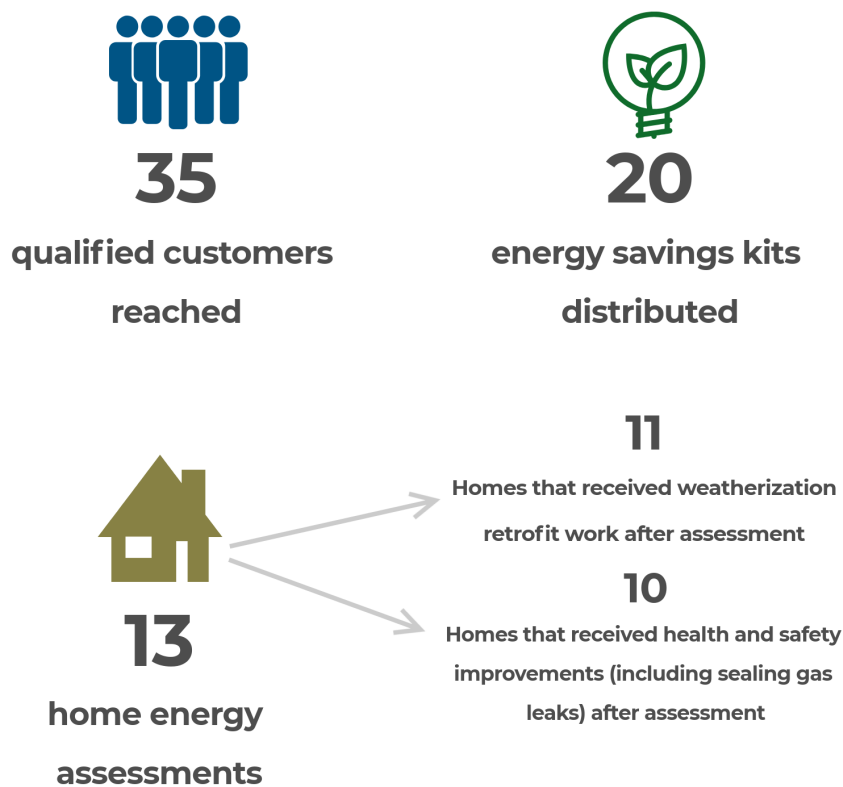
“**The EAC worked hard to reach eligible residents during the pandemic through flyers and online information sessions held by non-profit partners... The EAC reached over 8,000 residents through these outreach efforts.**”

AMEREN-NICOR PILOT PROGRAM

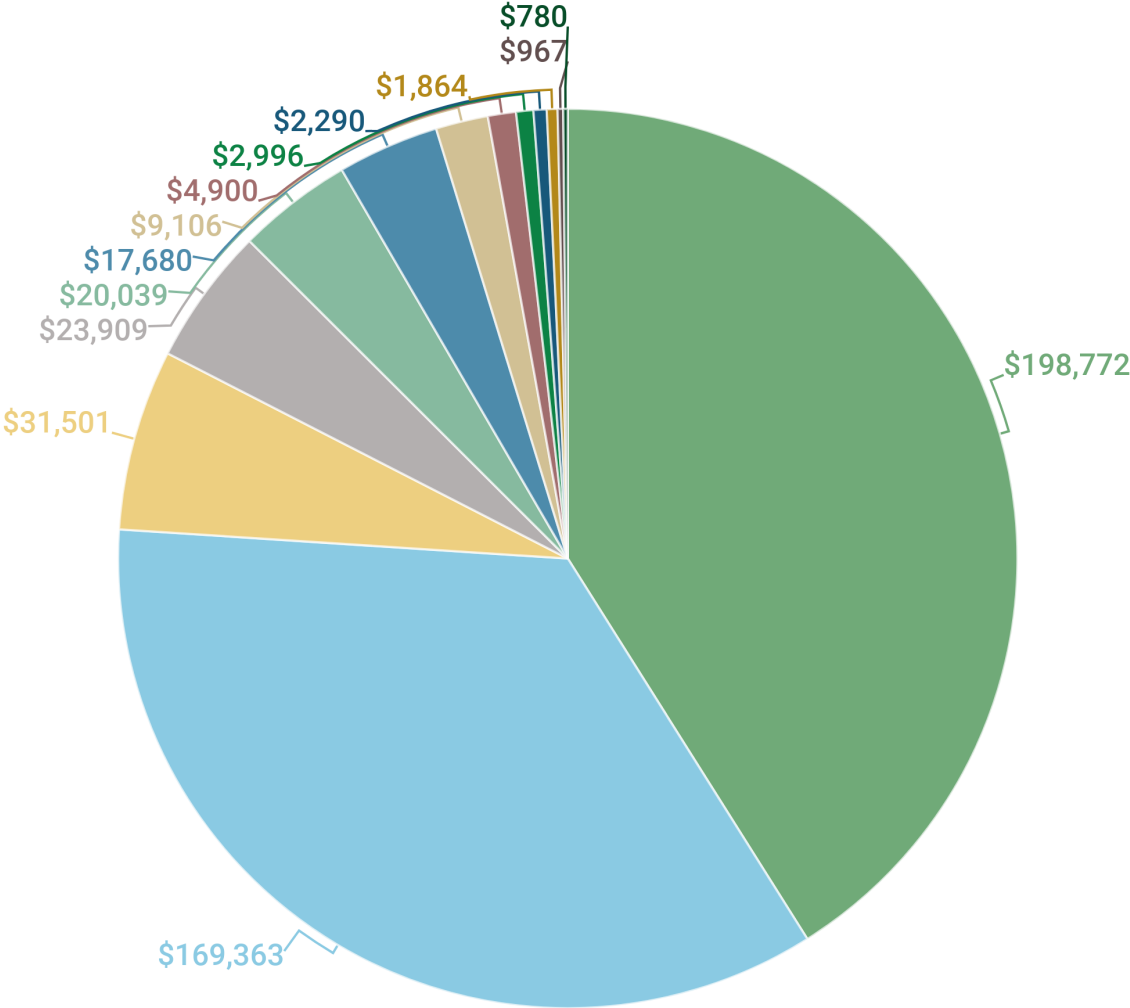
The EAC was selected to help with community outreach to promote a pilot program offered by Ameren and Nicor that aims to increase access to energy efficiency services in Bloomington-Normal households with service from both utilities and an 80% area median income level.

The program has two components. Any eligible resident (renter or homeowner) can sign up to receive a free energy efficiency kit in the mail. The kit contains a wide variety of energy-savings tools like LED light bulbs, multiple kinds of weather stripping, hot water pipe insulating tubes, door sweeps, a smart plug strip, low-flow shower head, and more.

Qualifying homeowners or renters with landlord permission can also request a full home energy audit. Depending on the results of the audit, residents receive additional insulation, air-sealing, furnace repair, and more for free. The EAC heard from several participating residents about their positive experience with this program, which continues through the end of 2021.



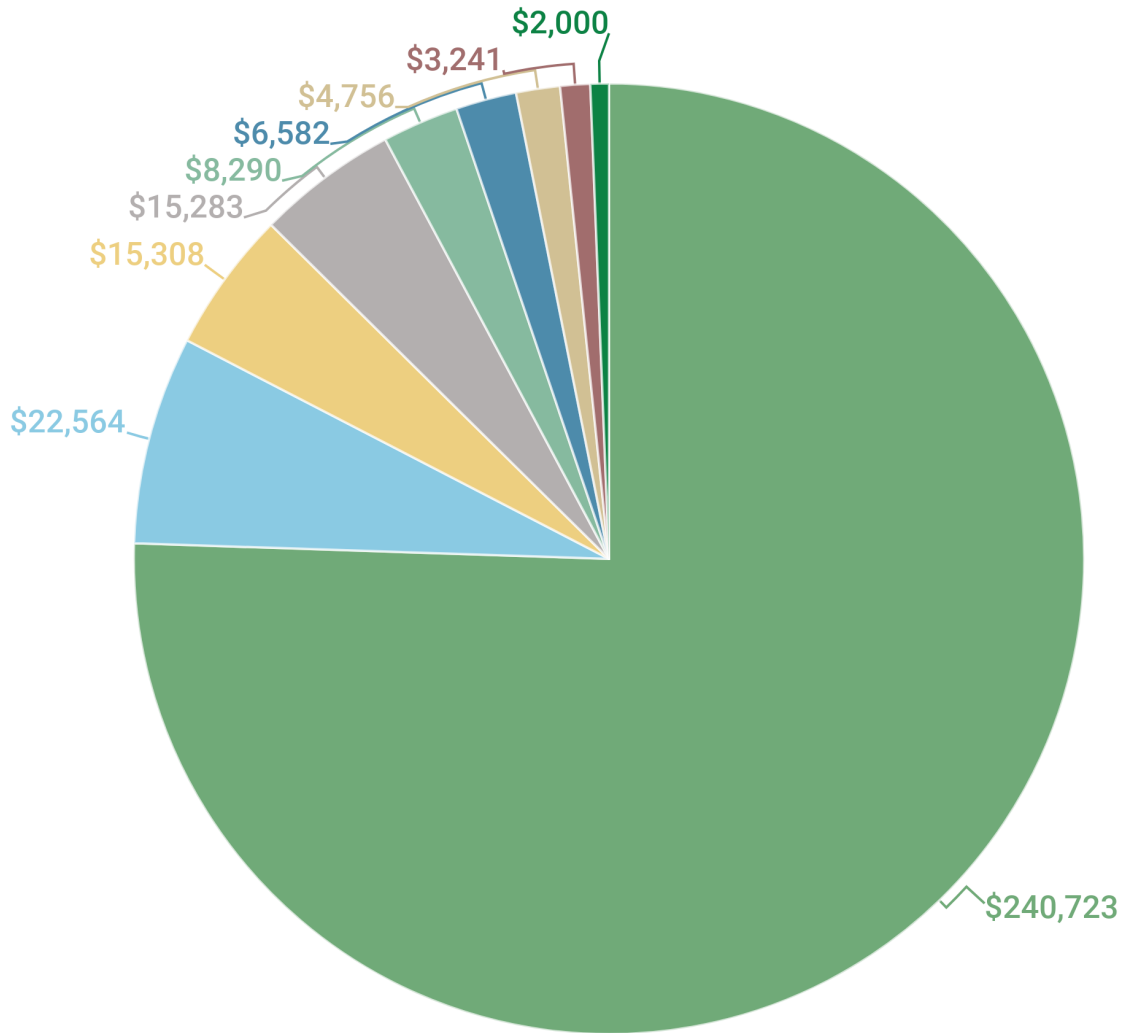
2020 FINANCIAL SUMMARY: EXPENSES



- Salaries & Wages ● Fees for Services ● Office Expenses
- Advertising & Promotion ● Supplies ● Payroll Taxes
- Employee Benefits ● Insurance ● Dues & Subscriptions
- Conferences ● Depreciation ● Occupancy ● Miscellaneous

Total expenses for 2020: \$484,167

2020 FINANCIAL SUMMARY: REVENUE



- Governmental Support
- Program Fees
- Contributions
- Membership Dues
- Fundraising Events
- Investment Return
- Merchandise Sales
- Micellaneous Income
- Sponsorships

Total revenue for 2020: \$318,747

2020 FUNDERS & SPONSORS

Public Agencies

- Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District
- City of Bloomington
- McLean County
- Town of Normal

Business & Private Supporters

- AB Hatchery
- Better Earth Logistics
- Myra & George Gordon
- Normandy Village
- Resource Innovations
- StraightUp Solar
- Zimmerman & Armstrong Investment Advisors

Non-Profit Sponsors & Partners

- Elevate Energy
- Friends of the Constitution Trail
- Habitat for Humanity
- Illinois Prairie Wild Ones
- Midwest Renewable Energy Association
- Nature Conservancy
- Normal Township Activity and Recreation Center
- ParkLands Foundation
- West Bloomington Revitalization Project
- YWCA McLean County

ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER STAFF



Michael Brown
Executive Director



Larissa Armstrong
Assistant Director



Jen Gravley
Education Coordinator



Eric Marshall
Program Assistant



Gary Kamplain
Program Assistant



Angela Bossard
Administrative Assistant



Nate Bair
Sugar Creek Stewards Coordinator

2020-2021 Board of Directors

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Mike O'Grady, Vice President & McLean County Ex-Officio
Tim Golliday, Past President
Nancy Armstrong, Treasurer
Charles Bristow, Secretary
Wayne Aldrich, Normal Ex-Officio

Kevin Koethe, Bloomington Ex-Officio
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