



# NEWS



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## Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Receives Major Gift from Walmart Foundation

Springfield – The Illinois agriculture industry's 28-year effort to teach school children about agriculture has received a major boost from the Walmart Foundation. Representatives from Walmart presented a check for \$50,000 to Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom during Ag Day at the Illinois State Fair.

As a result of this generous gift from the Walmart Foundation, Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (IAITC) will develop After School Agriculture, a 9-week program to bring the concept of consumption agriculture to a non-traditional audience. IAITC will provide these curricular resource materials at no cost to after-school care professionals and summer recreation programs.

"Half of all children participate in some type of after-school or summer recreation curriculum," said Susan Moore, Director of the IAA Foundation. "By expanding traditional Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom program materials to meet the needs in the growing after-school education arena, the impact of the agriculture message will reach even further."

"Agriculture is the beating heart of the Illinois economy. At Walmart, we support local farmers. Our customers recognize the importance of buying local products, and we are proud to stock our stores with locally grown produce," said John Bisio, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations for Walmart in Illinois. "By supporting Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom, we hope to help the next generation understand the critical role that agriculture plays in all of our lives – especially as Illinoisans. We are thrilled to have this opportunity."

"Ag Education is more important now than ever before," said Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Tom Jennings, who also serves on the IAITC Executive Coalition. "We live in a time where more children are growing up in either urban areas or rural areas removed several generations from the farm, and may not have the opportunity to see how important agriculture is to our state or to our nation. We thank Walmart today for its dedication to help us teach the future Ag leaders of tomorrow."

Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom has a rich history of being the agriculture education resource for teachers to utilize in classrooms, beginning as young as kindergarten, then cultivating their knowledge and interest in agriculture throughout their education. The IAITC program is regarded as a flexible and professional program by teachers and administrators. All of its lessons meet Illinois state learning standards and teachers use the program to enhance their existing curriculum. A network of county coordinators and volunteers deliver programs and materials with accurate agriculture content to teachers and children in all 102 Illinois counties. Universities and public school systems recognize the IAITC program as the source for training teachers and educating children about the importance of agriculture, including the role it plays in providing healthy food choices to achieve a nutritious diet.

Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom is the top funding priority of the IAA Foundation, Illinois Farm Bureau's charitable foundation. Funding from agribusiness and related industries, state government, commodity groups and individual donors helps the IAA Foundation reach its annual goals to raise funds to implement IAITC programming and provide teaching resources throughout the state of Illinois.

