



CORY GREEN, PRESIDENT of the FFA Alumni Association, introduces the FFA students who helped with Saturday's Pie Auction and Chili Supper. Photo by David Porter.

'Spring into Gardening' offers guest speakers, silent auction, sales booth and more March 5

MATTOON, Ill. – The upcoming 12th annual Spring into Gardening event will offer gardening education speakers, a silent auction, and a sales booth to help community members start the growing season.

The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners of Coles, Cumberland, Douglas,

Moultrie and Shelby counties will present this workshop from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 5 at Broadway Christian Church, 1205 S. Ninth St., in Mattoon. The doors will open at 8 a.m. for check-in. The cost for the event includes resources and refreshments.

Master Gardener volunteers

plan and present Spring into Gardening each year to provide a continuing education opportunity for area gardeners, homeowners, and landowners. In addition, revenue from the event helps these volunteers present workshops and other learning opportunities to the community throughout the year.

"As Master Gardeners work on our final preparations for our Spring into Gardening event for 2022, I think about all the opportunities that will be available to those who attend," said volunteer Glenda Fitzgerald. She and Brenda Pierce are serving as co-leaders for the event.

Fitzgerald said participants could win a door prize, be a top bidder in the silent auction, purchase something beautiful at the garden novelties and handmade items sales booth and learn important information about gardening.

"Through learning how to improve our gardening, we also improve our environment. I encourage you to join us in this event for the community and will be looking forward to

meeting you when you arrive," Fitzgerald said.

Spring into Gardening's lineup of guest speakers from Extension Educator Ken Johnson, 8:40-9:35 a.m.; Horticulture Educator Jennifer Fishburn, 9:40-10:35 a.m.; and Environmental and Energy Stewardship Educator Duane Friend, 11:20 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Johnson will present information on how to use raised beds to maximize space for vegetable production, including garden placement and plant selection. Fishburn will explain pollinator plant options to produce beautiful and fruitful habitat for pollinators. Friend will talk about how to produce high-quality, nutrient

rich compost by selecting the right mix of materials.

Spring into Gardening registration will close Feb. 21 or when available spaces have been filled. To register, visit go.illinois.edu/SPRIG22. To keep participants safe, face coverings will be required; and refreshments will be served in a designated area.

The Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. Those in need of reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, or more information or registration assistance, should call the Extension office in Coles County at 217-345-7034. Early requests are encouraged to allow sufficient time for meeting access needs.

Tips on unifying a blended family

By Kayli Worthey

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While conflict is bound to happen in all family structures, blended families encounter many unique challenges. Knowing what to expect can help address issues before they spiral out of control. Growing up in a blended family was anything but simple. I witnessed arguments between co-parents, legal disputes, scheduling challenges, and even felt jealous of my half-siblings and territorial of my parents and home. It was not until I got older that I realized the blessings blended families hold. Every family gathering is filled with laughter, guidance, support, and most of all love. While we may not all share DNA, we are family and that is the best gift that life can offer.

A blended family, also known as stepfamily, is a family where at least one parent has children from a previous relationship, making the child(ren) not biologically or adoptive related to the other spouse (Kumar, 2017). Often, blended families are created after remarriage. According to a study done by the Pew Research Center, 42% of the 2,691 participating adults have a step-relationship including stepparents, step- or half-siblings, or a stepchild(ren) (2011). The Pew Research Center also found that 16% of children are living in a blended family where at least one household member is a

stepparent, stepsibling, or half-sibling (2015).

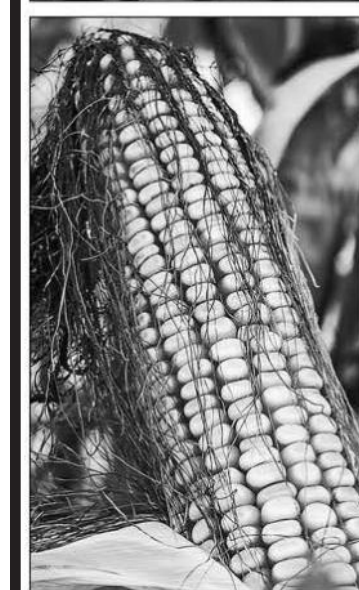
Blended families often struggle with things like miscommunication, scheduling challenges, disconnectedness, and co-parenting. It is unavoidable to have issues like scheduling conflicts and miscommunication when you are combining two separate families into one. Feeling disconnected is very normal in blended families specifically in the beginning with bonds between stepchildren, stepparents, and half-siblings. Co-Parenting is also a struggle in blended families as parents are not only parenting in their household, but they are also parenting with their fellow co-parents in different households (Kumar, 2017).

Children of blended families specifically struggle with jealousy, sibling rivalry, territorialism, and changing routines. When a blended family is created, jealousy of stepsiblings and stepparents getting attention from their biological parent is common. Rivalry with stepsiblings and half-siblings is especially bitter if they feel like they are being compared to one another. On top of this, children may often start to feel territorial when it comes to their physical items like their bedroom and toys and their parents. Their routines are also bound to change due to adding other siblings' schedules in the mix as well (Braithwaite, Olson, Golish, Soukup, & Turman, 2001).

Challenges are common

in blended families but, there are many different solutions that could work best for your family. Here are 12 ways to help unify your blended family:

1. Resist the urge to talk fellow co-parents out of their opinion—listen and absorb.
2. Remember the main goal of co-parenting is to put the child first by offering continuous support and love from both parents together as well as any stepparents or other siblings involved.
3. Create family traditions unique to the new family like weekly family traditions or a special annual summer vacation.
4. Make sure each family member has their own personal space & items that they control.
5. If children must share rooms, make sure the kids have an active voice in dividing the room and decorating it.
6. Create schedules for using family items like TVs, board games, and even the shower to avoid lack of sharing items.
7. Encourage children to talk about their feelings and ACKNOWLEDGE them.
8. Spend quality time with children individually during the transition.
9. Encourage children to work with their siblings rather than compete against them.
10. Do not compare children.
11. Try to schedule non-custodial parent visits on the same weekend each month if possible.
12. Be organized and use a calendar. (Maybe even color code it.)



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PLEASE RSVP

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