

# Keeping homes cool without high energy costs

Extreme heat can make homes uncomfortable and unsafe, especially for families without air conditioning. High indoor temperatures increase the risk of heat illness, dehydration and other health problems. Older adults, young children and people with long-term health conditions can be at greater risk.



RACHEL MATTINGLY

Running air conditioning for long periods can raise energy bills and strain household budgets. Because of this, low-cost cooling strategies are important for protecting health and managing costs.

## HOW HEAT ENTERS THE HOME

Homes stay cooler when heat is kept out in the first place. Sunlight shining through windows and onto walls is a major source of indoor

heat. Blocking sunlight is an effective and affordable way to reduce indoor temperatures. Airflow also matters. Letting cooler outdoor air move through your home at the right times of day can lower indoor temperatures and reduce the need for air conditioning. These strategies are especially helpful for renters or households that cannot make major home changes.

## WHY COOLING STRATEGIES MATTER

Keeping homes cooler supports health and helps families manage rising utility costs. Simple actions can reduce indoor heat, improve comfort and lower energy use during heat waves, when power systems are under heavy demand.

Low-cost options help ensure that heat safety is not limited to those who can afford air conditioning.

## WAYS TO KEEP HOMES COOLER

Block direct sunlight with curtains, blinds or outdoor shade during the hottest part of the day.

Open windows early in the morning or in the evening to let in cooler air.

Use fans to improve airflow and increase comfort.

Close windows and doors during peak heat to keep hot air out.

Drink plenty of water and monitor indoor temperatures during extreme heat.

Small, practical steps can make a meaningful difference in comfort, health and energy use during hot weather.

Contact your Marion County Extension office for more information on saving home energy costs.

Source: Monica Mundy, PhD, Extension Specialist for Community and Family Health



Photo provided

Pictured are Meredith Bruner, Scott Maples, Jane Vanhook, Dalton Miller, Robin Humphress, Chris Elleman, Brian Sears, Stephen Ransdell, Woods Adams, Rick Jansen, Jason Dean, Nick Spoonmore, Brandie James, Amanda Kinman, Libby Mayes, Barbara Estes, Jennifer Daniel, and Dan McKay.

# Ephraim McDowell awards AED grants across region

Washington County Youth Sports is one of those recipients

traffic and community-centered spaces—where immediate response can make a critical difference.

"Providing access to AEDs in high-traffic community locations is critical. These devices empower bystanders to act quickly and effectively during cardiac emergencies, significantly improving survival outcomes across our region," said Nick Spoonmore, Administrator of Ephraim McDowell Regional Medical Center.

DANVILLE - The Ephraim McDowell Health Care Foundation is proud to announce the recipients of its 2026 Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Grant Program, awarding life-saving equipment to seven organizations across its service region.

This year's program generated strong interest, with 27 organizations submitting applications. Each proposal reflected a shared commitment to improving emergency preparedness and enhancing community safety. After a thorough review process, seven organizations were selected based on demonstrated need, community reach, and overall impact.

The 2026 AED Grant recipients include:

Mercer County: Anderson Dean Community Park

Lincoln County: Stanford Fire Department

Boyle County: Centre College

Casey County: Casey County Emergency Management

Garrard County: Logan-Hubble Memorial Park

Washington County: Washington County Youth Sports

Marion County: Kentucky Classic Arts Center

By placing AEDs in these locations, the Ephraim McDowell Health Care Foundation is helping ensure life-saving equipment is accessible in high-

"We are committed to strengthening the health and safety of the communities we serve. This program reflects our dedication to proactive care—ensuring individuals have access to life-saving resources when and where they are needed most," said Dan McKay, President and CEO of Ephraim McDowell Health.

"We were incredibly encouraged by the 27 organizations that applied this year. The application process gave us meaningful insight into the unique needs across our service region, and it's inspiring to see so many groups prioritizing the safety of their communities. While we wish we could fund every request, we are proud to support these seven recipients and the impact they will have," said Brandie James, Philanthropy Coordinator for the Ephraim McDowell Health Care Foundation.

The AED Grant Program is one of many ways the Foundation continues to invest in initiatives that strengthen community health and save lives.

# Sweet potatoes need 150 days

This southern crop is tropical by nature but can be grown successfully in Kentuckiana as long as we wait until it is warm (nighttime temperatures in the 60's). If they have 150 frost-free days and some steamy Ohio Valley weather, we will be knee deep in sweet potatoes by Thanksgiving. Homegrown sweet potatoes are far superior to anything you will find at the grocery store, so if you love this crop as much as I do you might consider planting a plot.



JENEEN WICHE

Sweet potatoes require very little attention—other than keeping the weed competition down. It takes me about 10 minutes to prep the row with some composted manure and a garden fork; and another 10 minutes to pop two dozen slips into the ground...they are watered in with a little fish emulsion and generally perk back up the following day; if it is hot, I will shade them with a screen propped up on some blocks until they root out.

Ideally the bed should be a little on the sandy side so that drainage is maximized but average garden soil amended with composted manure is adequate. Unlike the potato, which is planted out in tuber form, the sweet potato is planted out as a little seedling

called a slip. You can grow your own slips by cutting a sweet potato into several chunks, suspending them on toothpicks in a bowl and covering half the tuber with water; sprouts will form, and these are "harvested" as your slips for planting.

Plant your slips in mounds about 12 inches apart; sink the slip so that the top leaves are just sticking above the soil surface. Water in (and irrigate, when necessary, sweet potatoes will really plump up with adequate moisture) and wait. Many sweet potato growers suggest fertilizing only a portion of your plants so you can be the judge: the consensus is that unfertilized sweet potatoes taste better. Let your compost do the work instead!

Sweet potatoes are harvested after the first fall frost turns the foliage black. Carefully dig your sweet potatoes with a garden fork and let them dry in the sun for a couple of hours and then transfer them to a warm, shaded, well-ventilated area and spread them out on some screens or newspaper. Let them cure in the warm shade for another 2 weeks, dirt and all, before you put them in storage. Prior to storage use your hands to rub off residual dirt but do not wash them.

You can harvest "baby bakers" as they grow but the sweetness of the potato is enhanced if you wait until after frost and several weeks of curing. This process allows the starches to turn to sugar. I noticed last year it took about a month in storage before the sweetness really came forward.

Properly cured sweet potatoes can store for 6 months or more at about 50 degrees. Obviously our slightly warmer basement is adequate because we typically get up to 7 months of successful storage. Some old-time sweet potato growers are emphatic about not disturbing your sweet potatoes until you are ready to eat them. This is why, they say, homegrown sweet potatoes are better than store-bought. Store-bought sweet potatoes are on the move which causes the sugars to constantly move through the tuber

hastening undetectable spoilage; the homegrown variety sits quietly in the basement which allows the sugars to settle to the bottom, keeping the tuber fresher and sweeter.

If you decide to grow sweet potatoes annually then be sure to rotate the crop to control potential insect problems. There are few pests, really, but if you plant in the same place year after year the sweet potato weevil may find itself a permanent home.

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