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Heather Edwards, program director at the Walnut Grove Vocational Farm in Kirkland, gives a tour of the facility to Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs on Wednesday during his visit to announce the awarding of a grant to the DeKalb County Community Gardens from the Illinois Charitable Trust Stabilization Fund.

DEKALB COUNTY

Community gardens awarded \$20K grant

State treasurer announces funding at vocational farm

By **DREW ZIMMERMAN**
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KIRKLAND – The DeKalb County Community Gardens is one of 20 non-profit organizations to receive a share of more than \$400,000 from the state of Illinois’ Charitable Trust Stabilization Fund.

State Treasurer Michael Frerichs made the announcement Wednesday at the Walnut Grove Vocational Farm in Kirkland and said he was impressed by all of the services DCCG offers.

“They provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the hungry, they do job training, and they do skill training for the disabled,” Frerichs said. “It’s a wonderfully run program that addresses a lot of community needs.”

The vocational farm, specifically, provides training for people with developmental disabilities and has helped several of them into paying jobs.

Dan Kenney, director of the DeKalb County Community Gardens, said the money will allow the nonprofit to hire a part-time coordinator who will expand services for the “Grow-Mobile” mobile food pantry. Kenney said the refrigerated truck already has served more than 5,000 individuals throughout



Dan Kenney

the county.

“This is going to have a lot of positive impact for individuals in the county struggling with food insecurity,” Kenney said.

The grant program, which had been authorized in 2007 but remained inactive until 2017, provides for nonprofits with annual budgets of \$1 million or less. Funding comes from filing fees nonprofits pay by incorporating in the state of Illinois.

Frerichs said the inaction was first discovered in 2015 during an audit, but it remains unclear as to why grants were never dispensed.

He and the treasurer’s office works with an 11-member committee that oversees the management and guidelines of the fund. For the 2018 calendar year, grants were focused on three categories: workforce and economic development, housing and food programs.

A total of 98 applications were received by the treasurer’s office during the first 2018 application period from January to March. A second application period will be available from July 1 to Sept. 30.

Special attention was given to grant applicants located in areas where pervasive poverty, unemployment and economic distress exist.



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