

West Salem Organizations receive Illinois Farm Bureau Rural Development Grant

To elevate rural communities, Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) partnered with county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) to award 30 Rural Development Grants totaling \$120,000 to support local efforts across the state, including projects in Edwards County.

The West Salem Fire Department in conjunction with the West Salem Athletic Association received a Farm Bureau Rural Development Grant to purchase an AED and Stop Bleed kit for the community park and ballfield, which they are in a multiyear plan to upgrade. This facility hosts the annual countywide multi-day Freedom Festival, grade school baseball games, around 80 summer league softball and baseball games, and other community gatherings.

“We are thrilled to bring life saving emergency medicine supplies to West Salem,” stated Kenny Clodfelter, president of the Edwards County Farm Bureau. “Supporting and preserving the best interests of our agricultural communities is part of our mission, and this grant does just that.”

Of the grants awarded, nine are addressing rural emergency services’ needs, and 21 are projects focused on supporting community and economic development or enhancing quality of life.

The Rural Development Grant Program provides resources and support to help local communities and counties successfully implement projects and overcome challenges inherent in rural development projects, such as lack of funding and volunteers or complicated grant applications. In selecting grants, IFB searches for projects that will meet a need in a community, county or rural area, get residents excited about what is happening in their community and benefit farm families.

For the 2026 grant program, IFB and COUNTRY Financial invested \$100,000 and \$20,000, respectively.

Pictured: Rebecca Perry (Edwards County Farm Bureau), Ashely Spray & Heather Spray (West Salem Athletic Association), Matt Lynch (Edwards County Farm Bureau Board member), and Jason Arnold & Harvey Fenton (West Salem Fire Department) pose with the emergency medical equipment for the West Salem Community Park & Ballfield.