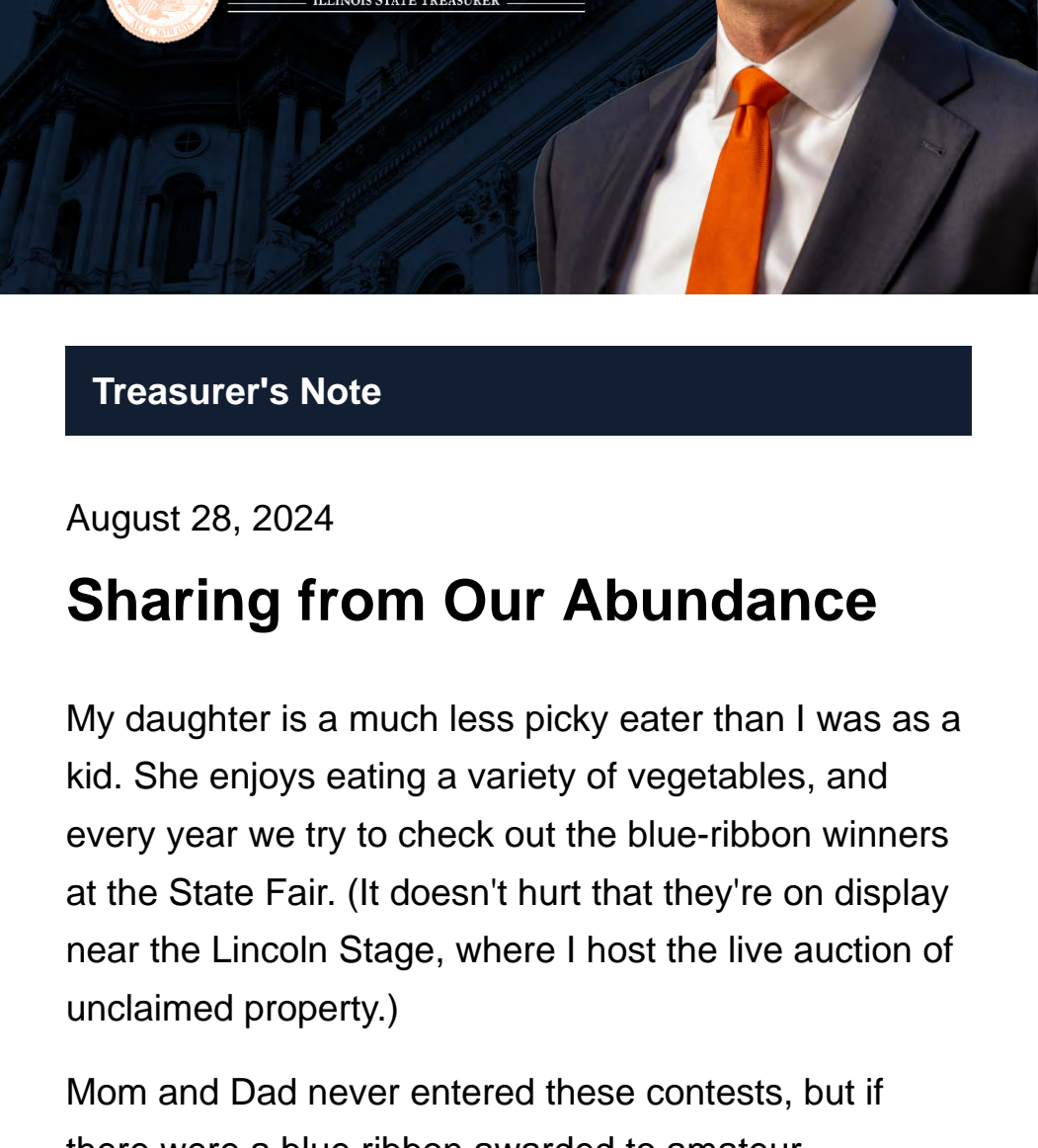


My office's Charitable Trust program is accepting grant applications now from small nonprofits.

[View online version](#)



### Treasurer's Note

August 28, 2024

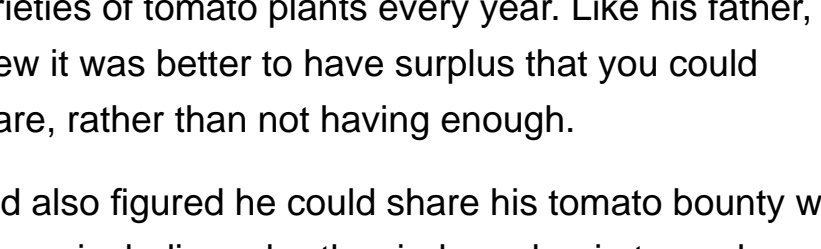
## Sharing from Our Abundance

My daughter is a much less picky eater than I was as a kid. She enjoys eating a variety of vegetables, and every year we try to check out the blue-ribbon winners at the State Fair. (It doesn't hurt that they're on display near the Lincoln Stage, where I host the live auction of unclaimed property.)

Mom and Dad never entered these contests, but if there were a blue ribbon awarded to amateur gardeners for sheer quantity of vegetables grown, there were years they could have competed.

Dad developed his love of gardening while growing up on a farm. His father raised corn, soybeans, and hay to sell along with milk from a herd of cows. They also had a vegetable garden to grow food for the family. And they grew sweet corn. So much sweet corn.

Grandpa planted so much because he knew no crop is guaranteed to turn out. There could be a drought, insects, or any number of other problems — in my grandpa's case, thievery by raccoons — that would affect his harvest. If he planted a lot, even in a bad year, they would still probably have some food.



***These are some of the prize-winning vegetables and fruits my daughter and I saw at the Illinois State Fair.***

But in a good year, they would have way more than they could eat. They gave sweet corn to my family, my uncle's family, and any friends or neighbors who wanted it. My grandfather knew that having surplus food to feed others is a better problem than not having enough.

I suspect Dad, who worked as a truck driver hauling rock and asphalt, missed farming. At least that's how I explain his ever-growing garden. It started out normal-sized, with green beans, potatoes, onions, and other vegetables. But Dad kept adding more and different varieties of tomato plants every year. Like his father, he knew it was better to have surplus that you could share, rather than not having enough.

Dad also figured he could share his tomato bounty with others, including a brother-in-law who, in turn, shared the cucumbers and zucchini he grew.

Our garden peaked at 76 tomato plants. I helped Mom fill several basement shelves with canned tomatoes and tomato juice. We had tomatoes with nearly every meal. And still, we had far more than we could consume.

Dad loved planting his garden, but most of the picking of the vegetables fell to Mom. That summer, she'd had enough and declared that anyone was welcome to our tomatoes, so long as they picked them.



***During the Summer of 76 Tomato Plants, tomatoes filled my parents' deck. You can see a small portion of them above. When this photo was taken, tomatoes covered a table, a bench, and other surfaces outside the camera's view. And there were still more tomatoes to come.***

My office has a program called [Charitable Trust](#) that works on food insecurity. Back in 2007, larger nonprofit groups persuaded state lawmakers to allow a portion of their filing fees to support smaller nonprofits.

Previous officeholders didn't set up a way for grants to be awarded, however, and the money was just sitting there. When I became treasurer in 2015, we conducted an audit and discovered this. We decided to work together with nonprofits and their volunteers to make sure that money helped people.

Today, an 11-member board considers grant applications from nonprofits with annual budgets of \$1 million or less. Since 2017, the board [has awarded](#) \$4.3 million in 221 grants to 187 charitable organizations, helping more than 100,000 people.

We are [accepting applications](#) for the latest round of grants through the end of September. Up to \$20,000 will be awarded to selected nonprofits with food assistance programs and economic and workforce development programs.

If you work for such an organization, or know of one in your community, please encourage them to apply. I don't have a garden to rival Mom and Dad's, and I didn't inherit their green thumbs, but they did provide me some advice: It is better to have extra and to share with people who are hungry than to not have enough.

Sincerely,

**Michael W. Frerichs**

Illinois State Treasurer

**P.S.** My parents continued to have a garden for many years, and they continued to share with family and neighbors. But after the Summer of 76 Tomato Plants, Mom put her foot down and they scaled back to something more reasonable.

**P.P.S.** When the pandemic began in 2020, my daughter and I started a COVID garden in our yard. It looks like the green thumb gene skipped my generation in our family!



## State Fair Fun!



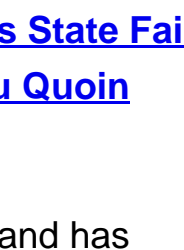
Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs' office hosted and participated in many events recently at the State Fair. Among them: the Twilight Parade, the Cream of the Crop Photography Contest reception, and the live auction of unclaimed property. You can watch highlights in this video.

# HAPPY LABOR DAY!

Thank you to all the workers who make our lives better!



## THE MAILBAG



Welcome to "The Mailbag," which is your opportunity to ask me about topics like our programs, other state government functions, or anything else that interests you.

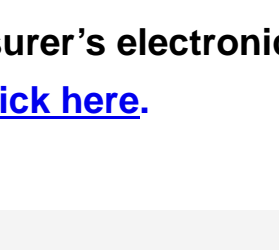
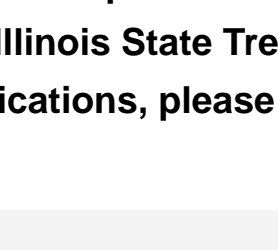
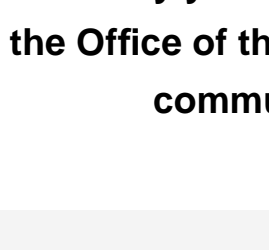
**Q.** I noticed that Illinois has two State Fairs. Why is that? —**Alex S.**

**A.** The [State Fair Act](#) spells out that both events will take place each year. Each promotes our state's successful agricultural industry. The [Illinois State Fair](#) took place Aug. 8-18 in Springfield. The [Du Quoin State Fair](#) runs now through Sept. 2.

The Illinois State Fair [dates back](#) to 1853 and has been held in Springfield for more than 100 years. The Du Quoin Fair [was started in 1923](#) by business owners who wanted an event closer to the people of southern Illinois. Under the late Gov. Jim Thompson, the state [took over](#) the Du Quoin Fair during the mid-1980s, making it the Du Quoin State Fair. I can personally attest that you can get a corn dog or a lemon shake-up at either State Fair. My staff and I attend both, helping you look for [missing money](#) and providing information about our office's programs.

If you have a question for "The Mailbag," please [send me an email](#) with the subject line "Mailbag." I can't promise that every one of your questions will run, but we do read them all and try to respond. And let us know if we can use your name, or if you'd prefer to be anonymous.

### Follow us on Social Media!



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Springfield, IL 62701  
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