Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in Illinois according to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA). With the goal of having a positive impact on lung health, Jason Haupt, University of Illinois Extension energy and environmental stewardship educator, has made it a priority for the past five years to educate the public about the dangers posed by elevated levels of radon in Illinois homes including those in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. According to Haupt, one in three homes in Illinois have elevated levels of radon.

Over the past five years Haupt has given interviews, written articles, and taught classes about radon to help Illinois residents protect their health through understanding. Haupt taught 22 classes, wrote ten articles, and gave seven radio interviews covering the subject of radon in homes and how to test for it.

In Illinois, homes can be tested by either a professional or can be done by the home resident with a test that is purchased from a hardware store or through IEMA.

Haupt’s radon education efforts have contributed to a 64% increase in general knowledge and understanding of radon. His work has also likely contributed to some positive behavior changes that have been documented with respect to the radon issue. From 2013 to 2016, there was a 25% increase in the number of homes tested for radon for the first time in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of homes following the IEMA and US Environmental Protection Agency recommendation of being tested every two years.

Finally, according to the IEMA, over the same period of 2013 to 2016 the number of mitigation tags sold (an indication of the number of homes that are mitigated across the state) has increased. The number of homes mitigated in the state is a good indicator of a condition change associated with increased education and understanding of the dangers that radon poses to human health.