

For Immediate Release

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[insert CEED name and info for your county]

[insert name and info for other local contacts such as public health or economic development if they are co-convening your county planning team]

Shaping the Future of NE Iowa

Each month over 100 people in Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties gather to discuss and plan for the future. Known as Food & Fitness County Planning Teams, they are part of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative, one of nine communities nationwide selected for funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

For the past year they have focused on identifying local changes that could transform the local environment where everyone can eat healthy and have easy access to active living in northeast Iowa. Team members include adults and youth from all sectors, including public health, agriculture, education, government, and faith communities.

Public health data shows too many people in our five counties suffer from the effects of poor diet and physical inactivity. Local health officials see an increase in chronic disease related to obesity, including heart disease and diabetes. The age of Type 2 diabetes onset is lowering and starting to impact our youth. Not only do these changes impact the health of our citizens, but may also affect the economic stability of our communities if families are unable to afford the costly medicines needed to treat these chronic illnesses.

In many northeast Iowa communities gas station markets, convenience stores, and liquor stores are the only convenient source of food. Many communities also lack places for families to play and be active, especially during our long winter months.

The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative has built a regional collaborative to develop an action plan to implement changes to improve the quality of life for our children and families. They are engaging individuals and organizations from all sectors and from County Planning Teams. These citizens believe by working together they can create long-lasting and practical solutions and serve as a model of change in Iowa and beyond.

You can get involved by participating in your county's food and fitness planning team meetings. Over 500 people have participated in some way at the county and regional levels since the initiative began.

County planning teams meet each month and are pathways for everyone to have a voice in creating a new vision for our communities. The content of these meetings (including a monthly online webcast) is posted on the NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative's website: www.iowafoodandfitness.org. Those unable to attend meetings can view the information and comment by visiting the website.

The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness E-newsletter is another communication tool. E-mail wiemer@iastate.edu and ask to be added to the mailing list.

Contact one of these county partners for meeting times and additional information: the Iowa State University Extension office in your county, your county Public Health office or county Economic Development office.