

## **'A Place to Play with Ideas'**

"A place to play with ideas." That is how Tim Borich, director of Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development, described the Town/Craft Center. What vivid imagery to describe this building, this partnership, and this wellspring of creativity!

A place to play with ideas ... a place created from refurbished historical buildings and pieces of old corncribs, sustainable pieces of Iowa's past woven together with state-of-the-art design, out-of-the-box thinking, and a vision for Iowa's future.

This vision for economic renewal has come to fruition thanks to the dedicated collaboration of worthy partners. I cannot emphasize enough how pleased and honored all of us in Iowa State University Extension are to be involved in this effort.

As American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."<sup>1</sup>

The thoughtful, committed citizens of Hometown Perry, Iowa, have created a dynamic force for change. This organization recognizes that a community's past is but a stepping stone to its tomorrow. Hometown Perry builds upon a fine history as it celebrates the contribution of new immigrants and the vitality of small communities.

Iowa State's College of Design brings bright, willing, and able students eager to stretch their design wings, so to speak — to offer their ideas, practice their design skills, and interact with the residents of this community ... to make design come alive in a real place for real people with real needs. This isn't a textbook example or an experiment in a locked-up laboratory. It's real-life experience that will help these young people connect with Iowa and see the possibilities for their own future.

And Extension is the connector, the tie that binds together the expertise from the university with the needs of Iowans.

The Town/Craft Center is one of two new design outreach facilities in which ISU's College of Design and Extension are pleased to play a role. The other facility, in Sioux City, is an outreach center for urban design, historic preservation and community development. It's located in a 100-year-old former steam-boiler plant, with a four-story smokestack, in an alley behind

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/33522.html>

a historic district. This project also allows Iowa State students to gain real-world design experience in partnership with Iowa communities.

Both the Town/Craft Center and the Sioux City facility are a perfect example of Extension being in-sync with Iowa's values of healthy people, healthy environments, and healthy economies.

We build and support relationships with organizations, agencies, businesses, communities, and individual Iowans of all ages. We recruit our state's young people to Iowa schools and careers. We work to renew Iowa communities — improving quality of life, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, and helping communities develop as good places to live, work, and raise a family. And we bring resources to the table — the research from Iowa State, our ISU Extension staff, and our connections throughout the state. These are the keys to Extension's continued relevance today and in the future.

So let us play with ideas in this place, this Town/Craft Center that is breaking away from traditional economic renewal, this center that treats the building of "community" as a fine art or "craft." Let us demonstrate our creativity and our commitment to change. Let us not be afraid to ask "what if" or to accept the challenge of "why not!" Together we can dream, we can explore, and we can succeed — for Perry, for Sioux City, and for all of Iowa.