

Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative
Winneshiek County Planning Team Meeting Minutes
Aug. 15, 2007

PRESENT: Brenda Balk; Lorraine Borowski; Nikki Brevig; Dan Beard; Rick Edwards; Deb Edwards; Karen Foster; Rita Friest; Stephanie Hughes; Lindsay Erdman, Mike Juve; Elizabeth Kane; Craig Kitchen; Amy Kristapovich; Lyle Luzum; Sue Luzum; Ann Mansfield; Kate Mansfield; Craig Mosher; Lyle Otte; Bill Pardee; Brenda Ranum; Hannah Ranum; Adam Riley; Julie Shockey; Barb Schwamman; Betty Ransom; Randy Uhl; Krista Vanden Brink; Rick Varney; Lori Egan; Tracy Maher; Jennifer Johnson; Marissa Nordschow; Janet Lambert; Dan Beard and Janelle Pavlovec.

WELCOME: After brief introductions, Brenda Ranum and Krista Vanden Brink reminded participants about the suggestion boxes available for each meeting. They also said that two flip charts are available for each meeting. One asks, “Who’s not here that should be?” and the other asks, “What policy changes have you noted?” They encouraged Food & Fitness participants to be aware of both of these questions at all meetings.

Krista opened the meeting by saying the Iowa Department of Public Health is very pleased Northeast Iowa received the two-year Kellogg planning grant and will be watching our communities closely as the planning effort proceeds.

REGIONAL PLANNING TEAM: Rick Edwards, one of the Regional Planning Team members representing Winneshiek County at the five-county meetings, said the Regional team met July 24 for the first time. The following group guidelines were established: 1. remain open to all ideas 2. work together as a region 3. recognize strengths of all communities 4. no sidebar conversations during meetings 5. begin and end meetings on time 6. encourage multiple perspectives.

The Regional Team also reviewed organizational structure which includes: 1. Each county represented by two youths with one vote between them 2. County alternates should attend and share ideas, but vote only if an adult representative is absent from the respective county 3. using the parliamentary meeting style 4. each member will be reimbursed \$30 per monthly meeting, and 34 cents per mile for traveling to the meeting 5. The meetings will be held in Decorah 6. The meetings will be the last Wednesday of the month, noon to 2 p.m.

It was also mentioned the Luther Roundtable Room will be utilized when helpful, and that a Kellogg team will visit the team at the Aug. 29 meeting.

A second youth representative, (freshman – junior age) would be identified to serve on the Regional Food & Fitness Leadership Team. Adam Riley was appointed to work with Kate Mansfield to select a second youth representative from our county.

PLANNING, NOT PROJECTS: After Regional Planning Team alternate Lindsay Erdman mentioned that team members from other counties were getting anxious to begin projects, Ann Mansfield reminded that the Kellogg grant affords area volunteers “the time and space to plan.” She emphasized Kellogg funding to date is for planning, not projects. Brenda Ranum added that the planning phase means the counties are trying to learn what are the “best practices” in the U.S. in food and fitness programs. Lyle Luzum said communities shouldn’t stop doing projects just because of the planning process.

SAFE SCHOOL ROUTES: Participants viewed and discussed a webcast titled “Why Safe Routes to School Matter.” After viewing, participants discussed the following **CHALLENGES:** 1. distance is a barrier 2. personal safety is a concern 3. traffic danger can be significant in areas, particularly near schools 4. rural areas not conducive 5. weather 6. busy roads 7. lack of neighborhood schools 8. time 9. both parents working 10. decline in funding (related to gas consumption) 11. parent expectations of what a “walkable” distance is 12. amount students carry in backpacks 13. sports practices 14. parents who don’t walk 15. lack of a comprehensive sidewalk system

The following **BENEFITS** to walking/biking were discussed: 1. improved air quality because of less motor traffic 2. walking/biking to school can create lifelong habits 3. social interaction 4. increased student alertness 5. calories expended 6. can build a better relationship with an adult 7. increased awareness of surroundings 8. better test scores 9. better behavior

HELPING TO IMPLEMENT: The following were listed as assisting in increased walking/biking: 1. localized schools 2. volunteers to assist 3. designated safe routes 4. repair and building of new sidewalks 5. dropping students a distance from school 6. adequate parking so cars not congested near walking areas 7. more bike racks 8. collective system of sidewalks near schools 9. survey as to why they don’t walk 10. use of GIS to help put a plan together

WHAT SCHOOLS WOULD BENEFIT: 1. South Winn is interested in forming a committee 2. some mapping has already been done for Decorah 3. other options for Turkey Valley and North Winn?

GRANT PROGRAM: Brenda Ranum mentioned grant programs may be able to assist communities in establishing safe routes to school programs, and that Iowa State offers assistance in establishing goals, asset mapping, surveys and targets.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT: Before the full team meeting, several Food & Fitness members met with Dennis Henke, community programs specialist with the USDA office in Waverly. Dennis had been asked to attend to discuss possible USDA grant/loan programs for community or wellness centers. He said USDA this year had only about \$43,000 for grants for the 20-county area. But the amount of money in the guaranteed loan programs continues to increase. He advised that health-care components add points to loan applications. Childcare, Head Start programs, etc. also add points. He also said the no-interest Rural Economic Development Loan Grant (REDLG) program was a

possible source of funding for a community center, but that a steady source of income would need to be shown to repay the loan.

Suggestion Box Comments:

- Thanks for the refreshments
- Schools, Work Places are great centers of discussion in the next two month. Please don't overlook senior citizen centers, nursing and housing for seniors and other places they gather. **Reply:** *Although this initiative is to focus on the health of youth, children and families, we recognize that grandparents and parents are important role models and caretakers for our youth and children. Involving them in the discussions related to healthy, local food consumption and providing opportunities for physical activity and play for their children will be important.*
- Is there some way to not have backs to each other as we discuss? **Reply:** *We will work to move tables around before and after the web casts in the shape of a rectangle so people can have the opportunity to discuss.*
- Why are we watching videos again when we are to come prepared to the meeting by watching the videos? **Reply:** *The video webcasts were created for 3 purposes: 1) for county planning team members can view and discuss the same information in all 5 counties as a regional approach to planning; 2) so that people who couldn't attend monthly meetings would still have an opportunity to view the webcast and provide feedback on-line; 3) so county planning team members can show the webcasts to their work and community affiliated group/boards for input and discussion. Although people are welcome to view the video prior to the County F&F Planning Team meetings, it is recognized that not all people will have the time or access to the internet to be accomplish this task.*
- It's essential to elect the right officials (at all levels) who will support and stimulate local and environmentally sound farming practices and healthy local economies (not corporate/Chinese commerce).
- First 35 minutes were not useful or interesting to me (too much overhead). Group needs more community and food producer representatives. Seem to be largely a collection of government representatives. Why isn't healthy, locally grown food appearing in your plans? Do you think that's trivial? **Reply:** *The first 35 minutes were to help cover the mission of the grant, as well as gather data related to new policies being addressed. This will help us track over time if we are making changes in our communities. The Regional F&F Leadership Team reports will also help us provide an exchange between the county discussions and the regional discussion to develop a strong regional plan that will benefit our county as well. We will work to keep this discussion concise and meaningful. As to the second part of your question relating to the local food system. This is a vital element of this initiative. As indicated at our county meeting and in the webcasts, we will be addressing the issues related to building a local food system (both the procurement and consumption of local healthy foods beginning in December.) Presently, the regional Northeast Iowa Food and Farm (NIFF) Coalition has been working for over a year on these issues.*

Their meetings are open to the public and engage producers, processors, distributors, lenders, and non-profit organizations interested in the development and marketing of locally grown agricultural products to enhance the lives of local citizens. They have recently completed several assessments for our region and this information will be shared with us in December. To learn more about the NIFF Coalition and possibly attend their meetings, go to www.niffcoalition.org or call Brenda Ranum 563-382-2949 for more information.