

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

University Extension

Extension Connections with Central Iowa Economic Development

CIRAS partnership helps small processors stay in business. Stanhope Locker, a small meat processor and locker, was able to retain \$900,000 in sales and increase sales by \$75,000 after attending a Labeling 101 short course. ISU Extension's Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) partnered with the ISU Meat Lab in this course describing new state regulations and how to properly label products to be in compliance. Without this knowledge, numerous Iowa lockers, including Stanhope, would have been unable to stay in business.

River cleanup benefits local tourism, educates community. To commemorate ISU's 150th year, the Hamilton County Extension Council partnered with County Conservation and the Webster City Council to clean up the Boone River. Extension pledged money toward the cleanup project and helped facilitate planning and recruitment — teaching the importance of protecting and improving Iowa's aquatic resources. Trash-laden waterways impact the local economy through loss of fish and wildlife habitat, water quality issues, and safety concerns related to water recreation.

Clubs and community create career awareness for youth. Research indicates that youth who assess their interests and set goals are higher achievers in high school and are more likely to complete postsecondary education or training required for successful careers. That is why Boone County Extension incorporated a year-long Career Craze theme in all aspects of its 4-H program and provided club activity resources for leaders. Parents and other adults hosted worksite visits and spoke at club meetings about their careers. "I started thinking about my interests and skills and how they might be used in a future job," said one 4-H'er. "I have a better idea of the skills and training I need for the careers I might want," said another. According to national labor statistics, 42 percent of all U.S. jobs will require a vocational certificate or an associate, bachelor's, or higher level degree by 2010.

Extension invests in the wellbeing of Iowa children. Sixty-seven percent of Iowa children up to age 12 need child care while their parents work. But research shows that 80 percent of Iowa's child care is of poor quality. To improve child care quality, ISU Extension offers local training, evaluation, and consultation through programs such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and New Staff Orientation. These programs help providers meet recommendations for staff training, health and safety, and meaningful adult/child interactions. Providers earn points toward the state's new five-star rating system. Nearly 100 central Iowa providers have earned at least one star. A Polk County provider was the first to earn five stars for her in-home program. Investing in quality child care is good business; every dollar invested yields an additional 66 cents for Iowa's economy.

Extension engages producers in learning communities. Farmers' markets, community supported agriculture enterprises, restaurants, and food service entities offer small Iowa producers opportunities to improve local food systems. In Dallas County, 20 producers have formed a Growing Food and Profit team in collaboration with ISU Extension, National Rural Catholic Life, Iowa Network for Community Agriculture, and Dallas County Farm Service Agency. Producers share information and resources, working to strengthen their communities and increase income from their operations. Cleve Pulley sells organic fruits and vegetables grown on his land near Redfield. "There is no way to put a dollar value on what I have learned ... the sky is the limit for what I can do with my business," he said. Leopold Center research shows that if Iowans ate the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables every day and bought them all locally while in season (three months of the year), an extra \$300 million and more than 4,000 jobs would be added to the Iowa economy.

For more information, contact your county extension education director or visit the Iowa State University Extension website, www.extension.iastate.edu.