

2011 Points of Pride for ISU Extension in Cerro Gordo County



Pictured: Cerro Gordo County Extension Staff with Region 3 Director Gary Hall

County Extension Staff

Gary Hall
Region 3 Extension Education Director

Rick Pleggenkuhle
Agriculture & Horticulture Program Director
& Master Gardener Coordinator

Alicia Schmitt
County Youth Coordinator

JoAnn Bartusek
Office Manager

Becky Oelkers
Office Assistant/Clover Kids

Gail Castillo
Youth Program Specialist

Cerro Gordo County Extension Council

Every Iowa county has an elected Extension Council that guides local educational programming by partnering with staff. The council represents the issues and people of the county.

Pictured: Cerro Gordo County Extension Council
Left to right: Back row - Sterling Young, Dave Newman, Bill Cody, Randy Grey. Front row - Lana Schaefer, Sybil Soukup, Linda Rodemeyer, and Renee Frelund. Insert - Jason Saffold



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Get inside Extension and discover how we support healthy people, environments, and economies. Read about some of the ways ISU Extension and Outreach meets local needs, improves quality of life, and helps make Cerro Gordo County a better place to live. You'll be amazed at what we do.

David A. Newman
Dave Newman
Extension Council Chair

Gary Hall
Gary Hall
Regional Extension Education Director



Healthy Economies -4-H LEGO

According to the Education Equity Center at the Academy for Educational Development, by the time U.S. students reach 12th grade, 46.7% have demonstrated low interest and low proficiency in math. In the next five years, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jobs are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs in other fields.

To increase the numbers of youth excited about STEM topics, Cerro Gordo County 4-H has started FIRST® LEGO® League teams. Youth ages 8-14 work together to build and program robots, research real-world challenges, apply math and science concepts, and have fun while making new friends. More than 30

youth and 8 adults in Cerro Gordo County have been involved in these exciting programs over the last three years.

Healthy Environments - Herbicide Use in Agriculture

With each growing season, there is an increased concern about weed resistance to herbicides. Dr. Mike Owen, ISU Extension Weed Specialist, is conducting a statewide survey of potentially herbicide-resistant weeds. Cerro Gordo County Extension assisted with collecting seed from 10 fields in Cerro Gordo County with suspected resistance to the herbicide glyphosate. Samples were collected just prior to harvest (Sept.-Oct. 2011) and sent to Iowa State University for further evaluation. A 10-year history of crop rotation, tillage practices, and herbicide usage was also collected from each sample location. These seeds will be grown in greenhouses, sprayed with glyphosate, and evaluated for herbicide resistance. Results from this study will help determine the best weed management practices for corn and soybean growers in northern Iowa.



Healthy Environments - Horticulture Workshop

Last April, nearly 30 gardeners of all skill levels attended a “plant propagation” workshop given by Cerro Gordo County Extension. The workshop began with a PowerPoint presentation covering the basics of plant propagation using softwood and hardwood cuttings. Those in attendance were able to experience firsthand how to propagate several varieties of shrubs, evergreens, and houseplants by assembling a Forsythe Pot with provided materials. Using the Forsythe Pot method is one of the easier ways for homeowners to successfully propagate plants. Cuttings were then taken from a variety of plants and inserted into the growing media. At the end of the evening, everyone in attendance took home a Forsythe Pot filled with cuttings to be rooted at home over the coming weeks. Eventually these plants will be planted in their landscape.

Healthy People-4-H Clover Kids

Clover Kids is a FUN 4-H program for children in kindergarten through third grade. Children participate in hands-on activities designed to build lots of different life skills! In 2011, the Cerro Gordo County Clover Kids program was expanded from a 2-week summer program to a year-round program. Fifteen Saturday



sessions were held with an average of eight children attending each session. Topics were varied from the weather, fossils, puppet making, the color wheel, and much more. Everyone gained a chance to learn and enjoy teamwork in a fun, non-threatening environment.

Summer sessions were also held in Mason City, Clear Lake, and Rockwell and were led by 4-H Interns Megan Grant and Jordann Wenzel. A total of 32 kids attended these sessions.

Healthy Economies - Free Low-Income Tax Preparation

The Earned Income Tax Credit is the federal government’s largest anti-poverty program reducing the tax burden and supplementing wages for those workers. With great commitment from volunteers and communities, ISU Extension and Outreach increased the amount of returns electronically filed by 44% from last year. More than \$128,533 worth of Earned Income Tax Credits were captured and \$34,000 saved in tax preparation fees were returned to the local economy.

Members of the deaf and Hispanic communities were among those served. With an average income of less than \$14,500, those utilizing this free service can make the most of their money and find financial stability.

Besides providing free tax preparation and e-filing, VITA volunteers provided information on financial asset-building resources like budgeting workshops, free credit report reviews, Food Assistance Program, Rent Reimbursement Program, foreclosure assistance and small business workshops.

Healthy People - Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Twenty-six percent of the residents of Cerro Gordo County are 65 years of age or older (compared to 14.9% for Iowa). Ninety-five percent of older persons who need both paid and unpaid assistance because of

health limitations have family or friends involved in their care.

In response to this need, Powerful Tools for Caregivers was offered in Mason City in partnership with First Presbyterian and Good Shepherd in the fall of 2011. Participants met for six weeks to learn and discuss how taking better care of themselves will lead to them being better prepared to take care of their loved ones. They gained knowledge and practice in over 35 “tools” to put in their “caregiver toolbox” in order to take better care of themselves and get help with caregiving tasks.



Ag education through Extension

Future Plans for Cerro Gordo County Extension

- *4-H Clover Kids*—will be expanding to After School Programs in elementary schools
- *Horticulture Workshops for 2012*—public interest in gardening is on the rise
- *4-H LEGO*—Growing interest in science, technology, engineering & math through LEGO clubs
- *Free low-income tax preparation*—ISU anticipates an even greater need in 2012
- *Iowa Master Conservationist Program*—starting in July of 2012

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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