

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

University Extension



Howard County Extension

132 1st Avenue West | Cresco, IA 52136
Phone: (563)547-3001 | Fax: (563) 547-3012
www.extension.iastate.edu/howard

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

County Extension Staff

Charlie Baier

County Extension Education Director

Lynette Anderson

County Youth Coordinator

Sue Barnes

Office Assistant

Vanette Grover

Youth Field Specialist

Staff Serving Howard County, but based in other counties

Mark Storlie

Swine Field Specialist

Dale Thoresen

Dairy Field Specialist

Judy Isaacson

External Relations Specialist

Brian Lang

Crops Field Specialist

Erin Ludwig

*Family Resource Management
Field Specialist*

Patrick O'Malley

Commercial Horticultural Specialist

Cindy Baumgartner

Nutrition & Health Field Specialist

Mary Schrandt-Prouty

Northeast Iowa Area Director

Sandy Scholl

Community Development Specialist

Derek Thompson

CIRAS

Gary Sovereign

Extension Council Chair

Healthy People

Food & Fitness Initiative

The NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) has laid the groundwork to improve the policies, practices and systems that determine how food arrives on our tables and how our communities can grow opportunities for physical activity for all. Food & Fitness is a national initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. They have invested in collaborative efforts among Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties to change the policies, practices and systems that prevent communities from being healthy.

ISU Extension played a key role bringing organizations and community members together from the arenas of economic development, public health & hospitals, schools, colleges, DNR, county conservationists, churches, government officials, food producers, youth and parents. Over 1000 people have been actively involved in the planning process. Although planning has been the key focus to date, change is already underway.

When school districts learned it was possible to purchase local food for

approximately 9 months out of the year, administrators from 14 of the 18 local school districts agreed to send representatives to participate in a Regional School Planning Team last winter. They explored options for getting more local healthy foods and increased physical activity into the daily routines of youth and their families. Schools realized through collaboration, they may be able to purchase food jointly, share ideas that work, and connect with community resources through the NE Food and Fitness network.

By developing quality relations, people shared information about our local food and fitness environments and gathered data on what isn't known. This has led to better and more focused planning and the start of extensive collaboration and innovation in NE Iowa.





Back row - Katie Ferrie, Cindi Grover, Harold Noe, Duane Johnson, Joyce Swestka. Front Row - Scott Wiley, Gary Sovereign, Nancy Hruska. Not pictured: Edith Asfahl.

Howard County Extension Council

Every Iowa county has an elected Extension Council that guides local educational programming by partnering with staff. From needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of outcomes, the council represents the issues and people of the county. We have identified these local issues as priority topics for current and future programming:

- Support agriculture by providing training, information, and the latest research from ISU.
- Support the Food and Fitness Initiative promoting healthy foods, health community, and physical activity.
- Support the development and marketing of locally grown agricultural products.
- Increase our 4-H program by 3% this year and provide a safe environment for youth to learn and grow.



We connect you to Iowa State University.

We are your local link to make connections

for campus enrollment, continuing education, campus visits, campus exhibits, conferences, camps, and sporting events.

... and justice for all

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Healthy Economies

Volunteers Provide Free Tax Preparation For Low to Moderate Income

Four trained community volunteers provided free tax preparation and electronic filing for low-to-moderate income families in Howard County as part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. 45 people took advantage of this service provided in Elma and Cresco during the 2009 tax season, double the number of clients served compared to 2008.

More than \$5,000 in Earned Income Credit, \$1,000 in State refunds and \$13,000 in Federal refunds were returned to the pockets of our Howard county area residents. Comments included: "It helped because I am unemployed and didn't have the funds to get them done," and "This service brought assistance to me as well as disposable income which will be spent locally. Thank You!"

Budgeting Skills Taught in Tough Times!

With jobs being cut or hours reduced, and people still suffering from natural disasters, along with the increase in food prices, family budgets are being stretched. For families already living paycheck to paycheck, the additional costs are having serious consequences.



Participants in two different "Budgeting Basics" programs examined their spending habits and learned to manage their personal finances including ways to manage credit, save money, and track their expenses. 49 Elma Colonial Manor staff members attended staff in-services and 12 people participated in the program sponsored by local banks.

Twelve childcare providers from Howard, Allamakee, Winneshiek and Clayton counties also attended a

regional training in Ossian that focused on basic budgeting skills they could use for their business, as well as their personal lives.

Healthy Environments



Over 40 years of prior sulfur (S) fertilizer research in Iowa had rarely noted improved corn and alfalfa production. Since 2005 ISU Extension conducted over 40 local on-farm trials in 15 NE Iowa counties and identified numerous cases of S deficiency and yield responses to S fertilization for these two crops. Clean coal, less land fertilized with manure and other related issues have greatly reduced the amount of S deposited onto cropland.

Extrapolating the results of these 40+ trials show potential for proper use of S in corn and alfalfa production in northeast Iowa to net over \$15 million dollars a year.



4-H is on the Grow!

The Howard County 4-H program is celebrating an **11% membership growth in 2008 and a 4% growth in 2009!** Our youth thrive in a 4-H environment that provides opportunities to gain mastery of skills, independence through decision making, and service to the community while spending time with friends and caring adults.



Join 4-H!