

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
By Bill Arndorfer
Grundy County Extension Education Director
April 10, 2009

I would like to encourage you to check out a new resource from Iowa State University Extension that is designed to help individuals and families experiencing difficulties in these tough economic times. It is a new website called *Managing Tough Times* and can be accessed at: www.extension.iastate.edu/toughtimes/. On this site there are three primary topic areas: Families and Households, Businesses and Communities Surviving Economic Uncertainty and Farming in Today's Changing Economy. The following is a look at what you will find at this site.

When you visit the Families and Households page, you will learn how to make the most of your money, plan for good nutrition and how to take care of yourself in uncertain times. Let's take a brief look at each of these areas. Under Making the Most of Your Money section you can find Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites across Iowa. You can track your spending with a no-cost Money Management Calendar or you can use the Ballpark E\$timatE to figure how much you need to save to fund a comfortable retirement or learn how to save money and improve energy efficiency at home. Power Pay is a way to manage your debt. There are Monthly Energy Tips to help reduce energy use at home.

Nutrition for My Family section will help you learn how to plan and plant your garden. It will show you how to save money on food and start your own garden in containers or small plots. The Spend Smart Eat Smart tips will help you plan, shop for and prepare nutritious meals. Tips are also provided for making healthy meals in a hurry.

The How Can I Cope section will help you assess your stress level, learn how to adjust to reduced income, help you help your family cope, help understand the loss in job loss and how to keep your family strong in tough times while taking care of your marriage. Set aside some time to explore these topics and learn ways to deal with stresses in your life.

The Businesses and Communities Surviving Economic Uncertainty section will help the reader learn about industry services, leadership and training, and community food security. Farming in Today's Changing Economy provides information on traditional farms, transitioning farms and small farms. It also provides access to ISU Extension's Ag Decision Maker online calculators that can help estimate the cost of crop production, value of manure nutrients, setting personal, family and business goals, and how to figure capacities of grain storage facilities.

There is not enough room in this column for me to fully cover the helpful information available on this site. Please take time to become familiar with it. Use it for yourself and refer others who may benefit from it. If you don't have access to the internet, feel free to call the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979 to ask for help accessing the information you want.