



## FARM AND HOME NEWS



**CHARLIE BAIER, Iowa State University Howard County Extension Education Director**

**FOR THE WEEK OF May 16, 2005**

### **Free 4-H Day Camps for Military Kids**

Howard County Extensions 4-H day camps are free to military kids this summer thanks to scholarship money available through Iowas Operation: Military Kids project. We really want to get these military kids connected with a great youth program like 4-H. Its hard on any child when they have a parent gone for sometimes over a year at a time, commented Michael Cooley, Iowa Operation: Military Kids Program Assistant. Military kids are those kids with a parent in the National Guard or any Reserve or active service unit (Army, Air Force, Marine, Navy, or Coast Guard).

Military kids do not need to be 4-H members to attend county day camps. We welcome any and all youth to our day camps, and hope that it is a fun learning opportunity for everyone, said Charlie Baier, Howard County Extension Education Director. In addition, every military kid whose parent is deployed and attends a county day camp is eligible to receive a Hero Pack. The Hero Pack is meant to say thank you to the family who also serves our country while their family member is deployed. The Hero Packs will be assembled at the State 4-H Conference in June as part of the conferences community service activity.

Chris Gleason, Iowa 4-H Military Liaison, encourages all military kids to sign up for day camp. County 4-H day camps are a great opportunity for military kids to just go and have fun with other kids their age. It is a time when they can escape from worrying about their parents deployment. The camp scholarships are available through the generosity of several donors, and if more people want to donate to this scholarship fund, we can send more military kids to camp, Gleason said. Contact Gleason at 515-294-1557 for more information about donating to Operation: Military Kids. From Bug Camp to Mud and Muck, there is something to catch every interest. Contact the Howard County Extension Office at 563-547-3001 for more details on the day camps offered and to find out how to apply for the Military Kids Scholarship.

### **Growing Blueberries in Iowa**

Planting blueberries in Iowa is not for the person who needs immediate gratification, but it can be done. Here are some pointers that may help you succeed. The first thing to do is to test the pH in your soil. Blueberries like a pH of 4 to 5.5 and most of our soil in Iowa is at around pH 7. Then chose plants that will grow in northern Iowa like half-high blueberries. These plants are relatively small and usually only reach 2 to 3 feet in height. Some suggested varieties are Northblue, Northcountry, Northsky, and St. Cloud. Spring is the best time to plant blueberries and be sure to read and follow the directions. It is generally a good idea to fill the hole with a mixture of half soil and half peat. After planting thoroughly water each plant. Also remember that blueberries have shallow roots system and quickly become stressed during hot, dry weather. To help retain moisture and control weeds apply 2 to 4 inches of mulch around each plant. You can use sawdust, pine needles or shredded leaves. During dry weather water your plants weekly. You should not allow them to fruit the first 2 years.

### **Tent Caterpillar**

These caterpillars are evident from late April to early June on apple, crab apple, and related trees. The larvae gather at a major branch fork and construct a dirty gray silk web or tent. The caterpillars leave the tent to feed on tree buds and foliage on warm sunny days. At night and on cool, cloudy days the caterpillars rest in the protective confines of the tent. As the caterpillars feed and grow, they enlarge the tent, making it more obvious. Damage is more annoying than harmful. Defoliated trees usually recover with a new flush of leaves in June. The most practical control is usually to remove by hand the tent and caterpillars as soon as they are noticed. This should be done in early morning or at night when the caterpillars are in the tent. The tent can be trashed or buried.