



FARM AND HOME NEWS



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FOR THE WEEK OF October 2, 2005

Recent Movers Study

The Community Vitality Center CVC (a center at Iowa State University) is doing a study in Howard County of people who have recently moved to or from our county. It is an effort to better understand the decisions and thoughts of people who have moved and what they think about the communities and areas where they have lived. The results of this study will be a great help to community leaders and organizations to help communities grow. So please, if you get this survey in the mail, we ask that you take the 15 minutes needed to complete it and mail it in. It will help provide information that can help Howard County grow.

Energy Efficient and Healthy Homes Conference Scheduled in Cedar Falls

Energy Efficient and Healthy Homes Conference will be held October 13 from 12:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Cedar Falls Holiday Inn located at 5826 University Avenue in Cedar Falls. This conference is sponsored by Iowa State University Extension and the Iowa Energy Center. The conference will address a major concern in the housing industry today. This concern is how to maintain the balance between improving energy efficiency and maintaining in-home air quality. This conference is designed for builders, realtors, county health officials, or anyone associated with the housing industry. Exhibitors will be at the conference with home energy and housing displays. Registration cost includes a buffet dinner and handout material. Registration is \$40.00 per person. This conference has been approved by the Iowa Real Estate Commission for 6 hours of continuing education. A brochure with the conference agenda and registration form is available from the Black Hawk County Extension Office, Waterloo; by phoning 319-234-6811; or at their website www.extension.iastate.edu/blackhawk. Registrations are due by October 7.

Raised Bed Flower Gardens

Now is a good time to start your garden bed for next spring. Determine what type of garden you want: formal-square or circle or informal-oval or kidney shaped. Select the location that will meet the need for sunlight and accommodate the size and shape of the flower bed proportionate to the size of your yard. The next step is to obtain a load of good quality topsoil, a bag of peat moss (for drainage), mulch and some newspapers. We used a garden hose to help define the shape and size of the new bed. Place a layer of newspaper (two sheets thick) over the grass to help prevent grass and weeds from coming up in the new bed. The newspaper will breakdown over the next year and the grass that was under it will provide organic matter for the new bed. We made our bed 3-4 inches higher than the surrounding yard and 6 inches higher in the center to showcase all the plants. To help with drainage we mixed the peat moss in with the new soil prior to pouring it onto the newspaper (wetting the newspaper helps hold it in place). Next lightly mulch and water the bed to hold the new soil in place. Next spring after you plant the flowers add an additional 2-3 inches of mulch. One way to keep grass from creeping into the new flower bed is to surround the bed with a 6-inch deep trench that you can fill with stones.