Meeting Local Needs 2013

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ISU Extension and Outreach provides educational opportunities for economic development, food and the environment, health and well-being, and K-12 youth outreach. We meet local needs, so Black Hawk County can be an even better place for the next generation.

Kevin Sittig, Extension Council Chair
Bill Arndorfer, Regional Director

Black Hawk County

Economic Development

- The Cedar Valley Family STEM Festival was a mega-event, visited by 3,000 parents and kids in November. Over 80 activities and organizations provided hands-on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) activities. Attendees drove robots, tested a virtual welder, flew a flight simulator, conducted amazing science experiments, and viewed STEM seminars and interactive shows. Event goals were to increase students’ interests in STEM and promote awareness and highlight STEM-related educational and career opportunities.

This community-wide partnership included Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Waterloo Community Schools, Waterloo Schools Foundation, Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber, Hawkeye Community College, University of Northern Iowa, John Deere, Grout Museum District, Northeast Iowa Regional STEM Hub, Volunteer Center of the Cedar Valley and the Five Sullivan Brothers Convention Center. A grant provided by ISU Vice President of Extension and Outreach Cathann Kress funded this STEM showcase.

Health and Well-Being

- Four ServSafe Classes were held in BHC reaching 62 Food Service Managers.

- 42 child care providers attended a Workshop on Linking Literacy to Nutrition.

- 176 families participated in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), eaching 589 people. 90 families completed the program. 80% (72 of 90) of participants showed improvement in one or more food resource management practice. 83% (73 of 88) of participants showed improvement in one or more nutrition practice. 69% more often plan meals in advance. 70% more often use a list when shopping for groceries.

- Youth learned how to plant, care and harvest fruits and vegetables at several Cedar Falls and Waterloo elementary...
schools during the summer months. With the help and guidance of an AmeriCorps staff member and master gardeners, youth tasted and enjoyed new produce. Research shows that youth are more likely to try foods they grow and tend.

- Four elementary schools, including Dunkerton, Kittrell and Lowell in Waterloo and Poyner in Evansdale completed the People’s Garden Project, a nation-wide research project engaging the US Department of Agriculture, Iowa State University, Cornell – New York, Washington State, and University of Arkansas university extension services. Aimed at addressing childhood obesity and improving nutrition, the pilot project spanned four states, served an estimated 4,000 students at 54 elementary schools over two and a half years, and engaged low-income students in the physical activity involved in growing food, learning life skills, and teaching science and math through school gardens. School gardens remain at each site and students have experienced caring for and eating fresh produce.

K-12 Youth Outreach

- The 101st Black Hawk County Fair was another success with 195 youth exhibiting at the fair, including 50 Clover Kids! New this year was a Family Fun Night and STEM fair. Traditional events like the King and Queen crowning, family potluck and fun night and pie auction continue to be 4-H family favorites!

- Collegiate Outreach – Former Iowa 4-Hers are lending a hand to our County Council through the newly-formed University of Northern Iowa Collegiate Club. Future activities include a joint service project and leadership development! 4-H lasts for a life-time, right?

- Black Hawk County 4-H now sports 4 Lego teams – one Jr. Lego League team, 2 First Lego League Teams and one First Tech Challenge team, each leveled for different ages. Teams practice and learn together and compete against other teams, all designed to get youth excited about science and technology -- and teach them valuable employment and life skills. We congratulate are teams and their leadership.

Food and the Environment

- BHC Extension hosted its first FoodCorps member, Emma Cornwell. Part of a national team, Emma connects kids to real food and helps them grow up healthy. Her year of public service includes: teaching kids about what healthy food is and where it comes from, building and tending school gardens and bringing high-quality local food into public school cafeterias. Emma works in elementary schools and afterschool programs in Waterloo and one day per week in the Independence Schools.

- In October, women who own or manage farmland participated in a conservation discussion focused on soil health. Called Women Caring for the Land, a day-long program was sponsored by the Women, Food and Agriculture Network with funding from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Practices such as cover crops, no-till and strip-till were discussed and an afternoon field tour included a soil structure and stability testing demonstration. Over half of Iowa farmland is currently owned or co-owned by women.

The agriculture community continues to be served through events such as Pro Ag and Crop Advantage Seminars. Extension supports these community events: the annual Hawkeye Farm Show, farmer’s markets, health fairs, Money Smart Week events, Home Show, and National Cattle Congress.

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