ISU Extension in Dickinson County
1600 15th Street
Spirit Lake, IA 51360
Phone: (712) 336-3488
www.extension.iastate.edu/dickinson

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

Susan Reiser
Extension Council Chair

Cheryl Heronemus
Regional Director

Economic Development — A Strong Iowa

“Operation ReLeaf” Tree Project was a partnership initiative between ISU Extension and Outreach in Dickinson County, Alliant Energy, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The goal was to place 250 high-quality, low-cost shade trees throughout the county.

Pre-orders were taken through the Extension Office and youth in 4-H, FFA, the Ricochet Middle School Leadership Program, and Spirit Lake 8th grade were recruited to help with the drop-off and pick-up events. All 250 trees were distributed.

Benefits to the communities include:

- Energy cost savings for residents planting trees to shade homes/create windbreaks
- Support for local nurseries in providing diverse landscape trees to the community
- Increased home values of 3-15% with the presence of shade trees
- Improved long-term community reforestation and conservation through efficient landscaping

Additionally, economic studies show that shoppers claim they will spend 9-12% more for goods and services in communities having a high quality tree canopy. They will travel further and spend more time in these communities. All of this is good for the economic development in Dickinson County.

Extension is helping to create more economic activity and development by promoting unique community characteristics, such as shade trees, wind breaks and energy savings. This type of project benefits current residents and business owners and attracts others to the community.

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, the council represents the issues and people of the county.

We have identified these local issues as priority topics for current and future programming to help build a strong Iowa:

- Economic Development
- Food and the Environment
- Health and Well-Being
- K-12 Youth Outreach
Food and The Environment

“Spend Smart. Eat Smart” is a county-delivered program that helps participants learn strategies to save money on food expenses while incorporating new ideas into menu planning and food shopping.

Educational programming was conducted with senior citizens in the community to help them:

1. Plan smart before shopping to help reduce food expenses
2. Shop smart for nutritious items and save at the store
3. Eat smart by saving time and money whether eating out or at home

Participants learned about when and where to shop; how to compare food prices; menu planning; how to save money when eating out; and how to reduce food waste at home.

As a result, participants plan to “shop smarter by purchasing food items only at the grocery store and paper goods at the big box stores; do better at watching for store ads and coupons; and be more creative with leftovers to avoid food waste.”

Extension is providing strategies for consumers to spend smart and eat smart to improve their quality of life.

Health and Well Being

Early childhood development is a priority for Extension as evidenced with programs such as “Better Kid Care” for child care professionals and “Family Storyteller” for preschool-age children and their families.

The “Better Kid Care” program was offered as a series of 6 classes and 12 continuing education units for more than 50 child care providers.

Extension’s research-based professional development training aligned with the Iowa CORE standards and in turn equipped early learning professionals with strategies to provide high-quality, safe places for children in our communities.

The “Family Storyteller Program” was a 6-part, 12 hour series of research-based early literature programming with preschool-age children and their families. The program goal was to increase the amount and quality of time children and families spend reading together.

National studies show that this type of literacy skill development is the single best indicator for a child’s readiness and success in school.

Extension is preparing young children in Dickinson County with school readiness skills.

K-12 Youth Outreach

Extension is intentional in extending the campus educational reach to diverse youth audiences in the county.

Our 4-H program is the second largest youth enrollment in the state, second only to Polk County.

Additionally, we delivered six hours or more of educational programming with 26% of Dickinson County’s students in grades K-12 this past year. They were engaged in:

- Ricochet Middle School Leadership Program in 5th—7th grades (357 students)
- 6th Grade Outdoor Classroom at Hogsback (183 students)
- 4th Grade Ag-Citing at the Clay County Fair (210 students)
- Okoboji 3rd Grade Ag Day (75 students)

These positive youth development initiatives in Dickinson County are building multiple life skill outcomes for young people in the areas of citizenship, leadership, communication and the arts, healthy living and STEM.

Extension is educating and building partnerships to help youth solve today’s problems and prepare for the future.

... and justice for all

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