

Assisting Latino Businesses – Renewing Small Town Iowa

Over the past four years, Iowa State University Extension has been involved in assisting Latino business owners in Iowa in an effort to encourage these newcomers to prosper in the state economy.

Almost every town in Iowa with more than 7,000 people has at least one Latino business, and some small towns have up to 15 or more. These small businesses want to invest in Iowa communities. ISU Extension's Latino business networks provide the group support they need, along with technical and financial advice, marketing help, a newsletter and educational workshops. This grassroots economic development is helping first-generation immigrants establish and expand family-owned grocery stores, restaurants, clothing stores, car sales and repair shops, gift shops and more.



“Small businesses are big job creators in Iowa,” said Himar Hernandez, an ISU Extension community development field specialist. “Also, 90 percent of Latino businesses are located in downtown areas, usually occupying old buildings that otherwise would be empty. Through the Latino businesses we can inject life again into our downtowns and reverse urban decay and sprawl.”

Currently, ISU Extension is assisting businesses in Ottumwa, Mount Pleasant, Des Moines, Perry, Oskaloosa, Marshalltown and Storm Lake. Other communities soon to be added are Columbus Junction and Burlington.

“Extension has helped my business get involved in community events and survive the hard times after opening with a marketing class and a sales tax class.”

Roberto Martinez, Roberto Auto Shop

For more information about this program or other Iowa State University Extension resources, contact the Wapello County Office at 641-682-5491. Information is also available on the Iowa State University Extension website at www.extension.iastate.edu.

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... and justice for all

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