

# Idea Starters for County Extension Stakeholder Reports

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The following paragraphs were taken from various reports, including past County Stakeholder Reports. They have been sorted into three groups to match our “Healthy People, Environments, Economies” brand positioning. Use these as idea starters for similar programs you plan to highlight.

## Healthy People

### **Bringing big city support to rural issue**

Talking and learning about behavioral health issues, particularly related to suicide, is a quality of life issue in Humboldt County. Humboldt County public health, Extension, Humboldt Schools, along with other agencies and individual citizens have formed a coalition to build awareness of the signs of mental illness, deal with the stigma around it, and offer support for survivors who have lost someone to suicide. Extension has hosted national satellite broadcasts, provides staff support to grant writing and the formation of a survivors support group. Community response to coalition efforts is positive and increasing – showing that this rural county wants and needs local access to resources generally found only in the state’s largest communities.

**Extension invests in the wellbeing of Iowa children.** Sixty-seven percent of Iowa children up to age 12 need child care while their parents work. But research shows that 80 percent of Iowa’s child care is of poor quality. To improve child care quality, ISU Extension offers local training, evaluation, and consultation through programs such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and New Staff Orientation. These programs help providers meet recommendations for staff training, health and safety, and meaningful adult/child interactions. Providers earn points toward the state’s new five-star rating system. Nearly 100 central Iowa providers have earned at least one star. A Polk County provider was the first to earn five stars for her in-home program. Investing in quality child care is good business; every dollar invested yields an additional 66 cents for Iowa’s economy.

**Hispanic families get help with child care needs.** With the second largest percentage of Hispanic residents in the state, Woodbury County has a serious need for well-trained child care professionals. Finding high-quality child care and overcoming language barriers are challenges that face many working Hispanic families. ISU Extension has been partnering with the Regional Child Care Resource and Referral office to offer ChildNet, a child care training program delivered in Spanish. Participants learn how to prepare safe, healthy, and interesting environments for children, as well as successful child care business practices. Four new Hispanic-owned child care businesses have received training and are providing much needed child care.

**Students Take The LEAP** Ten MFL MarMac high school students took the big LEAP through the Leadership Education Action Program facilitated by Iowa State University Extension. Youth were engaged in multiple 4-H Challenge initiatives that involved a portable adventure course aimed to help youth work together to solve problems. The course is a powerful tool for helping people look critically at how their actions and choices can affect others and the group outcome. Student leaders also completed a personality assessment that helped them gain an understanding of how to cultivate relationships and work teams.

**Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14**

90 Floyd County families participated in a parent, youth, and family skills-building curriculum designed to prevent teen substance abuse and other behavior problems, strengthen parenting skills, and build family strengths. This Iowa State University Extension program has been proven effective in delaying the onset of adolescent substance use, lowering levels of aggression, increasing resistance to peer pressure, and increasing the ability of parents/caregivers to set appropriate limits and show affection to and support of their children.

**Wisdom and Wellness: Extraordinary experience for 175 Elma and Lime Springs children.** For the second summer, Vanette Grover, 4-H Youth Specialist for Howard County, partnered with the Howard-Winneshiek School District to conduct 4-week sessions of “Wisdom and Wellness” at the elementary centers. Due to the large number of latchkey children and those qualified for free and reduced meals, the program promoted wellness and nutrition in a safe place and children also continued social and intellectual development through the summer. “ISU Extension and 4-H have created life changing experiences for the local youth,” said Principal Rob Hughes. USDA funded breakfasts and lunches were served each day. Community sponsors covered program costs and nutrition education support was provided through the BASICS program and the Iowa Dept. of Public Health.

**BASICS grant brings \$94,000 to county.** Between 1963 and 1991, the prevalence of obesity in Iowa increased from 5.2 to 10.9 percent in children ages 6–11. Similar increases were noted in youth ages 12–17. Studies show that 25 to 50 percent of obese adolescents remain obese into adulthood. Prevention is the best way to treat this problem. The Pick A Better Snack program is offered through ISU Extension in the Wapello County school district to 1,600 students in pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Children learn to replace less nutritious snacks with fruits and vegetables, and drink more milk. Teachers also receive classroom support materials, books, and games for use with their students.

**The “Got Health” Nutrition Program** taught Forest City 2nd & 3rd graders to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables and increase physical activity to build lifetime healthy habits. The educational base for the program came from the Pick a Better Snack Campaign, Food & Fitness Craze, & Five-a-Day Promotion. Between September and May, the Forest City Nutrition Coalition, consisting of ISU Extension, Forest City Community School, Forest City Family YMCA, & public health, presented monthly educational programs and taste-testing of the featured fruit and vegetable. 79% reported they increased the amount of fruits & vegetables eaten and 91% indicated they were more active since the beginning of the project. 56% indicated family exercise time increased. The principal commented, “The students learned more about nutrition and how it affects their lives. The taste testing opened up their perspective to new things they had not eaten before.” The Nutrition Coalition received a \$5000 Wellmark Foundation grant to implement the program.

**Eat Well-Move More** worksite nutrition program consisted of an on-site wellness screening that included gathering blood pressure, height & weight of participants. The readings were used to calculate the risk of heart attack, stroke and kidney disease. Results were returned to participants with the first of eight weekly wellness self-study newsletters. Thirty eight people participated in the county and of those 23% were overweight and 46% were obese. 20% had optimal blood pressure, 62% pre-Hypertension and 11% were hypertensive and were referred to their physician. Results of the post screening showed 72% lost weight, 39% had a positive change in blood pressure primarily from pre hypertensive to normal.

## Healthy Environments

**Lime Creek Watershed Project** - Recently, Buchanan County Extension decided to assist in the development of a watershed project for Lime Creek in Buchanan County. Working with John Rodecap, Extension Agronomist, a plan was developed to contact crop producers in the Lime Creek Watershed and form a watershed council. The Corn Growers of Iowa granted the project \$30,000 per year for three years to be used for incentive money for conservation practice and structure development and implementation. This is a unique project as it is completely organized, designed, and administered by producers alone. No government agencies are involved in direct facilitation of the program. A grant application for state funding was awarded to the Lime Creek Watershed in the amount of \$160,000 over the next three years.

### **Horizons encourages positive change in Grand Junction**

There's change in Grand Junction, good change – thanks to a city-wide “junk clean-up” and a community summer festival. Both events are actions decided on at a Horizons study circles community meeting where ways to address economic issues and implement positive community change were identified. Volunteers, 130 of them, helped haul away four semi-loads and 16 dumpsters of trash, discarded appliances and furniture, and other debris. Residents, some with leadership training through Horizons LeadershipPlenty, are beginning to make plans for a 2008 summer festival after 950 people attended the revived celebration in 2007. “There is a growing interest in the future of Grand Junction,” said Dave Higgins of the Horizons committee. “Grand Junction is definitely benefiting from Horizons.”

### **Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program**

The communities of Lime Springs and Elma were selected to participate in the 2006 program. The visioning program provides an opportunity for the assistance. The program is carried out by the Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture, Trees Forever, private-sector landscape architects, and volunteer community steering committee. The program illustrates the vision as well as assistance in developing strategies to implement the plan.

**Extension assists with Operation ReLeaf Program** Poweshiek County Extension in cooperation with DNR and Alliant Energy participated in Operation Releaf Residential Tree Program. The purpose of the program is to distribute affordable landscape size trees to promote energy efficiency and community reforestation. Six varieties of shade trees (6 to 8 feet tall) were provided at a minimal cost to area residents. Instructions were given on how to plant and care for their new trees. 133 persons took advantage of the program with over 390 trees distributed.

### **Master Gardeners develop a landscape plan for Extension office**

The Master Gardeners in Bremer County have reorganized themselves around doing specific projects and educational updates. The first project was to design a landscape plan for the remodeled Extension office. Phase one has been completed with new plantings around the building and adding trees to the west side. Additional plans are now being developed for implementation in 2007 and beyond. The Master Gardener group help select the educational programs for the 2006-2007 Horticulture Program.

## Healthy Economies

### **Creating community spirit and dreams in Ellsworth**

The people of Ellsworth didn't take it as a compliment when they qualified to be a Horizons community, fulfilling the requirement of having more than 10 percent of their residents living in poverty. "But Horizons has been amazing for our community of 520 people!" said Gina Spohnheimer, an Ellsworth resident on the Horizons organizing committee. "We are beginning to dream again and we're finding that our best asset is our people." They are acting on those dreams - Eight and a half tons of junk were disposed of during "dump your junk" day; 17 youth and eight adults planted Main Street planters; and a community festival was held on July 13th. "With each Horizons project, the circle of people involved widens, more people are involved in the community, and we become a more caring community because we know each other," Spohnheimer said.

**Community capital enhanced in Perry.** Extension helped facilitate ways to learn, share, and honor Latino culture while promoting the inclusion of all individuals. One of these events was a travel seminar that allowed 22 of Perry's community members to learn more about Michoacán, Mexico, the state in which the majority of Perry Latino families lived before coming to Iowa. Many events have occurred as a result of the trip: the local newspaper wrote several articles based on interviews with the participants, a one week "culture camp" for youth took place, and a display highlighting the experience was on exhibit in the local museum. One of the participants from the Perry schools said, "I started asking more questions of my Latino parents and when I told them of the trip, they just opened up! WOW! This really opened doors to truly connecting with families."

**Afterschool programs good for kids, businesses.** Through a grant secured through Poweshiek Extension from Iowa 4-H Foundation's President's Campaign and the Iowa Pioneer Corporation, Grinnell Middle School has an afterschool science program. Juvenile crime triples and parental stress increases between 3 and 6 p.m. However, a study cited by Iowa Afterschool Alliance reports that when employees can access high quality afterschool programs for their children, they are better able to concentrate on work, increase productivity, and decrease absenteeism—cutting cost to employers at an estimated \$496 to \$1,984 per employee, per year, depending on the annual salary. That's why ISU/Poweshiek Extension conducts grade-appropriate safety, science, nutrition, and special project education during afterschool programs.

**CIRAS partnership helps small processors stay in business.** Stanhope Locker, a small meat processor and locker, was able to retain \$900,000 in sales and increase sales by \$75,000 after attending a Labeling 101 short course. ISU Extension's Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) partnered with the ISU Meat Lab in this course describing new state regulations and how to properly label products to be in compliance. Without this knowledge, numerous Iowa lockers, including Stanhope, would have been unable to stay in business.

**Clubs and community create career awareness for youth.** Research indicates that youth who assess their interests and set goals are higher achievers in high school and are more likely to complete postsecondary education or training required for successful careers. That is why Boone County Extension incorporated a year-long Career Craze theme in all aspects of its 4-H program and provided club activity resources for leaders. Parents and other adults hosted worksite visits and spoke at club meetings about their careers. "I started thinking about my interests and skills and how they might be used in a future job," said one 4-H'er. "I have a better idea of the skills and training I need for the careers I might want," said another. According to national labor statistics, 42 percent of all U.S. jobs will require a vocational certificate or an associate, bachelor's, or higher level degree by 2010.

**Northeast Iowa plans for more local food and healthier communities.** An effort to promote local agriculture took root this spring when the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative a \$500,000 two-year planning grant. Co-led by ISU Extension and Northeast Iowa Resource, Conservation, and Development, citizens from Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties are mapping strategies to increase the availability and consumption of healthy, locally grown foods and improve opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily lives. Already there is an expansion of “food-preneurism,” growing the local food economy at multiple points along the food chain. A \$50,000 increase in sales to local retailers and institutions is projected for 2007 alone.

**Linking cow/calf producers with feedlots yields big bucks.** Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity (TCSCF), a group of southwest Iowa beef producers and agribusiness professionals, links Iowa custom cattle feeders with cow-calf producers. ISU Extension helps TCSCF develop producer contacts in other states. This year 271 new consignors were recruited to feed nearly 7,000 head of cattle on nine southwest Iowa farms. Other area feedlots fed cattle from previous consignors. Customers have been happy with both the performance of their cattle and cost of gain, which is lower than most other areas of the United States. Businesses benefiting directly includes feedlots, truckers, feed dealers, corn processors, veterinarians, bankers, beef packers/processors, pharmaceutical companies, equipment dealers, concrete suppliers, and travel agents. As a result, more than \$2 million was spent in southwest Iowa. Depending on the multiplier used, total economic impact ranged from \$5–12 million.

**Growing Food and Profit meetings begin.** Dallas County is close to a metropolitan area with families interested in sources for safe food as well as ethnic food choices. This gives local farmers an opportunity to consider alternative and value added products they could add to the local food system. In cooperation with National Catholic Rural Life and the Iowa Network for Community Agriculture, ISU Extension brought people who grow and market food and those interested in doing so together for a series of programs and sharing of information. As a result, farmers are building networks of contacts and finding ways to increase their income.

**Companies position for bioeconomy.** Sho-Me Container, a corn-based plastic containers producer, located in Grinnell and Soy Clean, soy based cleaning supplies distributor in Brooklyn are two local businesses actively involved in this new market. Iowa State University Extension’s Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) is working with Iowa manufacturers to positively position their products to take advantage of the Federal Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program (FB4P). FB4P supports the emerging bioeconomy by opening up potential federal markets for biobased products. These efforts move Poweshiek county and Iowa to be a national leader in this arena.

**Extension helps identify potential bio-energy sites.** When two national bio-energy companies were searching for locations to build a series of ethanol and biodiesel production facilities, ISU Extension helped identify sites in Iowa. More than 40 locations in 18 Iowa counties were categorized regarding their potential. Results so far include start-up construction of a new 100-million gallon ethanol plant south of Council Bluffs. The company, Next Generation Biofuels Inc., intends to build a 50-million gallon biodiesel plant next door. Land acquisition has been completed for another southwest Iowa site. Economic impact to the area will be significant based upon the amount of corn and soybeans needed to supply the facilities, plus direct investment in equipment, materials, and infrastructure. That investment could run as high as \$160 million for each ethanol plant and \$70 million for each biodiesel plant. All are designed for expansion in the future. Employment will range from 40-50 people per plant. In addition, area livestock producers will have better access to inexpensive co-product feeds.