



## ISU Extension in Hamilton County

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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 Hamilton County can be an even better place for the next generation.*

Kris Walker  
*Extension Council Chairperson*

Jerry Chizek  
*Regional Director*

## County Extension Staff

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## Economic Development

In November, 2014 and again in January, 2015, ninety-six Hamilton County farmers and landowners learned about the new programs authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (commonly referred to as the Farm Bill) at informational meetings conducted by Kelvin Leibold, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm Management Specialist and Heidi Blair, Agricultural Program Specialist, Iowa State Farm Service Agency. Hamilton County producers annually raise over 190,000 acres of corn and over 115,000 acres of soybeans. Producers were provided with general information, "fact sheets", and sources of web based decision tools to make more informed decisions regarding program payments.

"Meetings included discussions on decisions farmers and landowners would need to make as they considered all their options," said Leibold. "In addition, the timeline for when decisions needed to be made along with information about our online Farm Bill decision tools were reviewed." Hamilton County producers were anticipated to receive over \$13,000,000 in payments for the 2014 crop year alone.



## Hamilton 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 of outcomes, the council represents the issues and people of the county.

*Council Members:*  
Kris Walker-Chairperson  
Cindy McCollough-Vice-Chairperson  
Lisa R. Tapper-Secretary  
Teresa Gourley-Treasurer  
Kathy Getting  
George Groves  
Bruce Perry  
Norm Wonderlich  
Steve Wright



## Health and Well Being

In June, seven infant/toddler child care providers participated in an Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) series in Webster City. The Environment Rating Scales are nationally recognized tools used to assess and improve the quality of child care programs. The workshops offered step-by-step guidance for making helpful changes that make a real difference in the work early childhood professionals do with young children. Participants noted program improvements throughout the four-week series which included lowering artwork to children's eye level, increasing book variety, adding additional soft elements to their classroom and improving sanitation procedures and safety standards. The third week included a site visit to a local child care program where participants practiced using the ITERS. At the fourth session, participants set continued goals for improvement. All participants received Department of Human Service approved professional development hours. Administrators completing the series received points on Iowa's Quality Rating System.

*"I have a better understanding of how to rate the quality of my program. Every Friday after Thursday's class I would go back to my center and inform the staff of what I learned and immediately make improvements!"*

-ITERS program participant

## Food and Environment

Soil moisture during the growing season is essential to an optimal yield. Tiling a field can be helpful with drainage but can be costly to install. That is why 68 producers from around the state gathered in Stanhope in December, 2014, for an all-day workshop to hear about the latest research and practices in farmland drainage. ISU Extension and Outreach provided the training in collaboration with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "The program provides essential information for designing and planning a new drainage system or retrofitting an existing system" says Kapil Arora, ISU Extension and Outreach Ag Engineer. "The economic benefits of tiling are well recognized. The environmental impacts from drainage plans were discussed. There are new technologies that may be useful in minimizing negative environmental impacts."

Morning sessions focused on drainage design concepts, economics and long-term benefits of tiling. Afternoon sessions included discussions on drainage maintenance issues, compliance with United States Department of Agriculture-NRCS requirements, discussions on controlled drainage, bioreactors and managing drainage water quality with wetlands. The day concluded with a presentation and discussion on the Iowa drainage laws, including several legal issues related to tiling.



## K-12 Youth Outreach

In 2015, the Youth Environmental Agriculture Field Days program recently earned the Governor's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Advisory Council Seal of Approval.

This STEM Seal of Approval is given to programs that sustain and spread STEM thinking. "Receiving this seal is significant because it's a brand new recognition for STEM programs by the Governor's STEM Advisory Council," said North Central Regional STEM Manager Paul Gibbins.

For 20 years, the Youth Environmental Agriculture Field Days program has been educating fifth grade students of Hamilton, Humboldt, Webster and Wright County school districts. The main focus of the program is to educate youth about agriculture with seven interactive, hands-on sessions. These sessions were taught by the region's four County Youth Coordinators, Conservation Departments, Public Health Departments and many volunteers. Over the 20 years, this program has impacted over 18,000 area youth.



### ... and justice for all

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