According to the Center for Disease Control, the number of overweight or obese adults in Iowa has increased by 36% over a ten-year span (1987-2006) - a strong reason why many churches, schools, and hospitals have started community gardens. Eating a healthier diet and exercising more are two proven ways to help lower obesity levels and reduce the risk of illnesses often associated with obesity. Gardening provides both healthy food and physical exercise.

The establishment of the Sheldon Community Garden supported by the O’Brien Extension office, Iowa State University College of Human Sciences and the Helen LeBaron Hilton Fund offered people within the community the opportunity to grow their own food which in turn, aided them with stretching food dollars, having increased access to healthier food choices and outdoor exercise plus community involvement.

“The Sheldon Community Garden had 31 gardening participants growing vegetables in all 33 plots. Overall, feedback from the survey respondents confirmed that participants felt very positive about being able to eat fresh grown vegetables and the physical benefits of being out in the garden,” stated Margaret Murphy, Horticulture Educator.

**Healthy Environments**

Subsurface tile drainage is an essential water management practice on many highly productive fields in the Midwest. Drainage water management is one of the practices used to reduce nitrate loads on tile-drained soils.
The Agriculture Drainage research group at Iowa State University studies and analyzes the impact of agricultural management practices on surface and subsurface drainage from both a water quality and quantity perspective. The goal of this research is to study the fate and transport of water and contaminants on the agricultural landscape and to develop and promote practices that minimize water quality impacts of agricultural production.

Kris Kohl, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Agricultural Engineer and Matt Helmers, Associate Professor and Extension Agricultural Engineer gathered the public to showcase a drainage management system at the Bruce Rohwer property north of Paullina, Iowa. With this drainage water management system, corn should never see stress from lack of water throughout the entire growing season.

"With the higher crop prices it (a drainage water management system) becomes a lot more viable," stated Brent Tewes, farmer and attendee from Spirit Lake, Iowa.

Healthy Economies

"Over the past year or two, I’ve fielded questions from people who have a small parcel of land – anywhere from 10 to 160 acres or perhaps more. They want to know if we have alternative ideas on how to establish a profitable agricultural business, realizing they probably can’t have a cost-effective traditional row crop operation on a smaller acreage," stated Melissa O’Rourke, ISU Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist.

This course provided an excellent framework to help alternative farmers assess their skills and interests, learn the realities of farm business ownership, and become connected to local resources. As part of each session, participants met established small farm operators who are "living the dream" and shared their experiences and recommendations.

4-H Program Impacts Made Worldwide; STEM Initiatives

O’Brien County 4-H programs engage all ages through volunteer leaders, youth participants and projects involving community members and organizations.

Dresses for Haiti, a service learning project, went global creating a meaningful and reflective experience for youth. This clothing project evolved from one 4-H member and her church to little girls in Haiti. Shelda from Haiti models one of the many dresses made and sent by 4-H members. Her smile says it all.

‘Rapid student impact’ is the mantra of the Governor’s STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) Advisory Council this year. The selection of six regional network hubs was announced in May promoting STEM education, as well as economic development across Iowa. Cheryl Heronemus, Regional Extension Education Director and Wade Weber, Regional 4-H & Youth Specialist both serve as regional advisory council members for the Northwest Iowa hub.

Opportunities abounded this summer for O’Brien County youth to attend regional GEAR Tech-21 and Vet Science 4-H camps.

Keep up to date with all O’Brien County news and events at www.extension.iastate.edu/obrien

O’Brien County Extension

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.

We have identified these local issues as priority topics for current and future programming:

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

Council Members

Lisa Koehlmoos
Brent Thorn
Fay Schall
Philip Woodall
Shanelle Matus
Neil Jurgensen
Steve Bootsm

…and justice for all

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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