The Benton County Extension Council has been elected by the people of the county to guide local educational programming by partnering with extension staff. From needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of outcomes, the council represents you and your issues. We are always serving Iowans and we are here for you. Now. Always.

Thank you for your support.

Brian McNulty
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Greg Svoboda
Council Vice-Chair
John Holst
Treasurer
Katie Stadheim
Secretary
Sue Birker
Council Member
Shannon Feuerbach
Council Member
Duane Fisher
Council Member
Allison Hicks
Council Member
Marleen Patterson
Council Member

Serving the People of Benton County

As Iowans adjusted to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, ISU Extension and Outreach continued to prioritize health and safety as we delivered research-based education to the people of Benton County.

3rd Grade Agriculture Day—This annual May event brought in 268 3rd graders from schools across the county to learn about Iowa animal and crop agriculture. With a few adjustments, we maintained a safe environment for youth and presenters while enabling hands-on learning. Class cohorts were separated to maintain social distancing between schools. Instead of the usual serve-and-sit lunch, we packaged grilled burgers and delivered them to buses. Youth touched animals and interacted with instructors and equipment, providing a stronger connection to local ag. Each participant received a Cover Crop 4-H on-the-go learning kit through support from the Iowa 4-H Foundation.

Produce Donations—In partnership with Old School Produce, we met with food pantries via Zoom early last year

10K Pounds Fresh Produce Donated to 9 Food Pantries
to decide which produce to grow. We narrowed offerings from 2020 but increased volume by 25% to best meet recipient needs.

- Two garden co-managers, youth and community volunteers planted, weeded, and harvested from April to November.
- The garden provided 10K pounds of fresh produce to nine food pantries.

We moved commercial, private, and manure pesticide applicator training to a larger location to enable social distancing. Through in-person classes, on-site participation via instructor on Zoom, and fully online options, 306 applicators completed education to keep their licenses active.

**More Youth Opportunities**
- Benton County 4-H partnered with Vinton-Shellsburg Community School District to deliver Real Money. Real World. financial literacy to high school youth in April. Participants reported increased understanding of payroll deduction and 90% said the program changed how they think about financial spending habits.
- **Summer Science Discovery Camp** served 145 K-5th graders. The weeklong, half-day science camps ran May 31-July 9 at 10 city parks throughout Benton County. Youth explored chemistry and material design properties. “We got to take home slime and learn interesting things in a fun way,” one youth shared, demonstrating the camps’ effectiveness at nurturing excitement and appreciation for science.

**Showcasing 4-H at the Benton County Fair**
A full fair experience returned in June 2021 at Benton County Fair. Youth enjoyed demonstrating what they had learned through their 4-H project work over the past year. Participation numbers were good in spite of COVID.

- We kicked off fair with a new event: 4-H Night at the Grandstand. This 4-H awards program, in partnership with the Fair Board, helped us showcase more of 4-H and included the crowning of the Fair Queen.
- Youth participated in 14 livestock & static/communication events with 979 total exhibits.
- Iowa State Fair selections included 43 Static, 8 Communications, and 34 Livestock exhibits with 13 Exhibitors selected for special awards or recognitions.

**Working toward Recovery**
As our state works toward recovery, ISU Extension and Outreach Benton County has been working with the Benton County Disaster Recovery Coalition on reviving the Benton County farm economy. Through an application process, we were able to help disperse donated funds to approximately 20 farmers to assist in disaster recovery. We also organized the Benton County Assistance Fair to bring together local partner organizations.

Looking ahead to 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Benton County will focus on building financial strength in local businesses and farms.

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**Extension Staff**

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County Director

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County Youth Coordinator

**Patti Upmeyer**  
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**Michelle Sillman**  
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