Serving the People of Black Hawk County

ISU Extension and Outreach Black Hawk County began 2020 focused on the following efforts:

- In partnership with Iowa Department of Human Services and Child Care Resource and Referral, child care workforce training has provided to support high quality best practices. Black Hawk County child care professionals working with our youngest Iowans completed the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale Training, an 8-hour course that includes self-assessment and improvement planning.

The Black Hawk County Extension Council has been elected by the people of the county to guide local educational programming by partnering with extension staff. From needs assignment 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.

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Masking up was a focus started by 4-H members and volunteers sewing over 1,000 masks delivered to at risk populations. Masking up is our new normal for program delivery.
It’s All About Food

While the pandemic did not stop local food from being produced, it did interfere with getting it to the people. Working with the members of the local foods team, Black Hawk County Extension and Outreach continued to help find ways for producers and consumers to connect while maintaining safety and health standards.

Local Extension and Outreach representatives were present at many of the Waterloo Urban Farmers Market to assist people in getting local foods and providing information about our programs.

Even with the restrictions of the pandemic, The Black Hawk County Master Gardeners had many opportunities to do outreach to our community. The group had two booths at the Home Show in February of 2020 where they were able to connect with over 500 people. Seeds were given out with information about various Extension programs and resources.

Once the pandemic hit, Extension implemented a community seed giveaway to encourage people to do more planting and growing. The seed giveaway exploded on social media and hundreds of people were safely able to get their seeds through contactless pick-up.

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- High quality child care includes strong relationships with children and their parents. A two hour training, *Eliminating the Barriers of Difficult Interactions with Parents Through Professionalism* in an effort to build collaborative relationships with families.
- Face to face ServSafe classes resumed the last week of June. Classes were added to the schedule to accommodate the need for physical distancing and smaller class sizes.
- Seeing a need for more hands-on activities for families during this time of virtual overload, 4-H offered free activity kits for families in Fall 2020. Kits focused on fun and educational Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math activities. Families picked up the kits at the Black Hawk County Extension office or had them delivered to their home. A partnership with EMBARC was formed for this hands-on program. The EMBARC staff is promoting the kits and their Waterloo location is a pick-up site.
- SWITCH is a program facilitated by 4-H to help a core team of elementary and middle school staff lead a wellness program to change behaviors in what to eat (fruits and vegetables), less screen time, and more physical activity. Don Bosco Elementary has been in the SWITCH program for 3 years.
- The Dick Young Green House answered calls regarding houseplants, trees, and gardening questions throughout the year. It directly served staff and STEM students in the 7th and 8th grade at George Washington Carver Middle School, covering topics such as plant magnetism, botany, composting, and tool usage.
- Youth nutrition programming has adjusted drastically for the *Kids in the Kitchen* program over the course of this year. The program is happy to now offer a website for

Cadence and Clarissa delivered FoodCorps services through fresh produce donation, school gardens, and food distribution groups.
families to easily access over 25 engaging, educational food and nutrition activities at home. The 7-lesson in-person program can now be taught virtually over Zoom and 7 to-go activity kits based on the 5 different food groups to promote continued learning at home.

**Adjusting to the Pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic changed daily life, ISU Extension and Outreach prioritized health and safety as we developed new ways to bring research-based education to the people of Black Hawk County. We remained open for business and we continued to educate, engage, and serve Iowans.

- The Black Hawk County office closed to the public on March 17th. This cancelled all in-person programming and services while redirecting the public to phone calls and e-mails. Staff were encouraged to work from home while some chose to work from the office while distancing from others.
- On July 6th the office re-opened to the public with protocols in place including social distancing, recommended masks, sign in sheets, limited access and disinfecting of common spaces.
- Some staff continue to work remotely and alternating schedules to limit the number of people in the office to 10 or fewer.
- Pandemic food shortages in Iowa led to increased vegetable gardening and new gardening efforts.
- Home food preservation questions surfaced as reported by Answerline. We responded by offering free online food preservation classes.
- Monthly Virtual Fresh Conversations meetings began in partnership with NEI3A, since in person gatherings have stopped during the pandemic.
- KXEL aired weekly radio spots on parenting topics, nutrition and horticulture with local specialists.

**Providing a County Fair Experience**

Although the traditional fair was not possible because of the pandemic, the Black Hawk County 4-H & FFA Fair found ways to give 4-H members a safe and educational fair experience. The fair was closed to the public, but 4-H’ers were still able to exhibit and share their accomplishments with the community through Facebook Live broadcasts, videos featured on YouTube, and online photo showcases.
Planning for Recovery

ISU Extension and Outreach Black Hawk County is determined to help Iowans help each other. Looking ahead to 2021, we will implement programs and services to improve the financial security of Iowans and stabilize Iowa’s Economy.

Supporting Iowans in improving financial security

Looking ahead to 2021, ISU Extension and Outreach Black Hawk County will support Iowans in improving financial security. Financial stress can extend across the lifespan and carry through families for generations. Adults and children under financial stress are more likely to have higher levels of depression and anger, lower self-esteem, and poor physical health. Iowans are more likely to become financially secure when they feel in control of their day-to-day financial life and can absorb a financial shock like a job loss or reduced income. ISU Extension and Outreach helps Iowans learn how to find reliable financial information, make informed decisions, and follow through to improve their financial health and well-being.

Reviving the Iowa economy, including the farm economy

Looking ahead to 2021, ISU Extension and Outreach Black Hawk County will support Iowans in reviving the Iowa economy.

ISU Extension and Outreach believes in the power of entrepreneurs and the value they bring to our communities. We support small businesses through research-based training and technical assistance. We are committed to helping Iowa’s rural communities, agribusinesses, and farmers remain financially solvent, connect to appropriate resources, find alternate markets, and increase their profitability.

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