In Cerro Gordo County a Mom’s Night Out for STEM was held for 17 Moms at the Music Man Square in Mason City. They learned a number of interesting science related items.

While Mom was learning cool science stuff, the children were learning about rockets and having fun with all kinds of activities.

Every Iowa county has an elected Extension Council that guides local educational programming by partnering with staff. The council represents the issues and people of the county.

Twenty-seven people from throughout north central Iowa recently participated in the Iowa Master Conservationist class. Master Conservationists are individuals that share an interest in the sustainability of Iowa’s natural resources, and in becoming better stewards of Iowa’s resources. Participants received over 32 hours of indoor and outdoor hands-on education led by local professionals. Topics that were covered include wildlife diversity, prairies, woodlands, wetlands, rivers, sustainable agriculture, and energy use. Classes took place at over a dozen locations throughout northern Iowa including Lime Creek Nature Center, Zirbel Slough, Landfill of North Iowa, Union Hills Wildlife Management Area, and the Fossil & Prairie Center.

To become an Iowa Master Conservationist, participants are also asked to contribute at least 32 hours of volunteer service back to their community or county. Here are several ways this class has already
begun giving back: 1) helping with conservation education programs at Lime Creek Nature Center, 2) collecting water samples for Iowa DNR’s IOWATER program, 3) monitoring wildlife through the Iowa Nature Mapping program, and 4) picking up trash and removing invasive plants around the Willow Creek area in downtown Mason City.

Healthy Economies - 4-H LEGO

To increase the numbers of youth excited about STEM topics, Cerro Gordo County 4-H is continuing to organize FIRST® LEGO® League teams. Youth ages 8-14 work together to build and program robots, research real-world challenges, apply math and science concepts, and have fun while making new friends. More than 25 youth and 7 adults in Cerro Gordo Co. were part of this exciting program last year.

Healthy People - 4-H Clover Kids

This year, Hoover Clover Kids got a taste of the theater while learning about reducing, reusing, and recycling. A five-week after-school program at Hoover Elementary ended on November 13 with a stage performance of “Mother Nature’s Wish Comes True”. Eight excited youngsters and two adults got the chance to perform live theater in front of family and friends. Everyone worked hard at learning their lines and getting their parts “just right”.

Clover Kids is a FUN 4-H program for children in kindergarten through third grade. Children participate in hands-on activities designed to build lots of different life skills!

Summer sessions were also held in Mason City, Clear Lake, Thornton, and Rockwell and were led by 4-H Interns Kaylee Vanness and Heidi Hain. A total of 35 kids attended.

Healthy Economies - Annie’s Project Educates Farm Women

Cerro Gordo County offers many educational programs dedicated to strengthening women’s roles in their family farm business. Annie’s Project is one such program that was recently given in Mason City over a two month period. Annie’s Project is a six session class that fosters problem solving, record keeping, and decision making for farm women.

Participants listened to and were given hands-on programs covering topics such as estate planning, crop insurance, farmland leases, grain marketing, and farm tax issues. Presenters represented private businesses including banks and lenders, insurance companies, cooperatives, as well these government entities: FSA, NRCS, and ISU Extension & Outreach.

Future Plans for Cerro Gordo County Extension

- 4-H Clover Kids will be expanding to Newman Catholic Elementary
- Horticulture Workshops will include new Master Gardener classes
- 4-H LEGO will be starting a LEGO Robots club for Clover Kids
- Free low-income tax preparation- continues in 2013
- Master Conservationist Class will be scheduled for July of 2013

Healthy People - Women, Land & Legacy

Cerro Gordo County is blessed with a very active Women, Land and Legacy program. WLL involves farm government agencies, non-profit groups, and faith based organizations that work together to reach agricultural women in rural areas. The goal is to develop a local network of agricultural women who will decide what programs, projects, and information they need to assist them in making good decisions on their farm. The Cerro Gordo WLL meets four times a year. Recent program topics include: farm financial statements, establishing a trust, and farmland values.

Healthy Economies - Free Tax Preparation for Low Income Families

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and our partners in north central Iowa worked to create financial security for families through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA).

By helping families claim their full tax refund and the tax credits for which they’re eligible without paying tax preparation fees, we help low-wage workers keep more of their refund which strengthens economies, builds better communities, and improves life for our families.

With commercial preparers charging on average $100 for a return claiming Earned Income Credit, the VITA program in North Central Iowa saved tax payers more than $28,200 in preparation fees for the more than 282 returns filed.

... and justice for all
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