

Community Matters Now



A bi-monthly publication for Iowa leaders from Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development

NEW TOOLKIT OFFERS GUIDANCE ON BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH 'POP-UP' EXPERIENCES

By Sandra Oberbroeckling | Program Specialist

Community arts specialist Jennifer Drinkwater has created a new guide that walks communities through planning and executing a "pop-up" event.

Pop-up events are temporary, unexpected public events that bring people together for a variety of purposes, such as highlighting a local asset, addressing or bringing attention to an issue, testing a new project, or simply celebrating. In addition, pop-ups provide opportunities to build connections and enhance the quality of life in your community, noted Drinkwater, who also is an associate professor in art and visual culture in Iowa State University's College of Design.

The guide, titled [Pop-up! A Toolkit for \(fun, invigorating, life-affirming\) Temporary Experiences](#), is the fourth in a series of community engagement toolkits from Drinkwater, all of which are available as free downloads on the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach online store.



Mardi Gras Indians, Super Sunday, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2019. Traditionally on the third Sunday in March, New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians mask up and parade throughout the city.

Pop-up! guides users step by step from start to finish and includes the benefits of pop-up events, an overview of material and space needs, community engagement and funding strategies, evaluation methods, and many thought-provoking project examples.

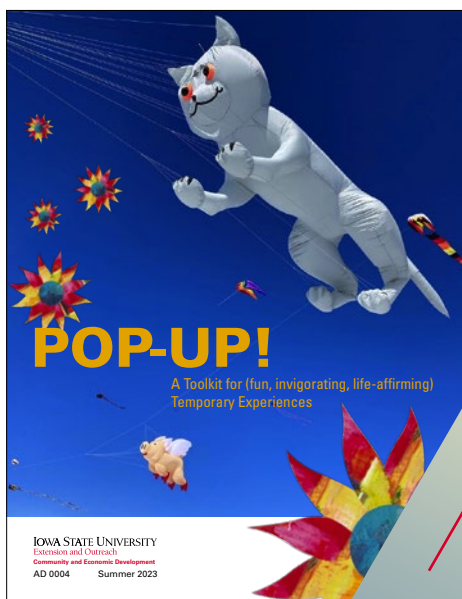
The underlying theme of Drinkwater's work is that there is more to creative community collaborations than the final product itself.

"The point of it in disguise is to encourage community bridging among diverse folks," said Drinkwater, who is also the curator of the [What's Good Project](#), a website where she shares "meaningful stories from where we live" through painting.

While Drinkwater's three earlier publications are geared toward art projects, *Pop-up!* takes a more general approach.

"I tried to write this [toolkit] in a more inclusive way that's not so art focused. So really, it's applicable for any kind of one-off, fun gathering, Drinkwater said. "It doesn't have to be art related; it could be cultural."

Drinkwater's other publications are also available for free download through ISU Extension and Outreach and include [POW: A Plan of Work Template for Creative Community Projects](#), [Community Mural Toolkit](#), and [Yarn Bomb! A Toolkit for Community Fiber Projects](#).



ONLINE RESOURCES

[COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARTS ENGAGEMENT](#)

[WHAT'S GOOD PROJECT](#)

[FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CARE COALITION](#)

[AGRICULTURAL MARKETING RESOURCE](#)

GREETINGS FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Community Matters! Why, yes, indeed, it does! I love this publication's title—its play on words, its use as an affirmation—it is just clever! This edition of *Community Matters Now* showcases work in Community and Economic Development (CED) at ISU Extension and Outreach that lives up to our newsletter's title.

A community's unique culture instills local pride among its members. Occasionally, we choose to celebrate our heritage, and these celebrations can have significant impact on our quality of life. Consider the range of Oktoberfests popping up across Iowa this fall and the colorful Latino festivals throughout the state. These events are a form of "pop up," showcasing and bringing together a community while inviting others

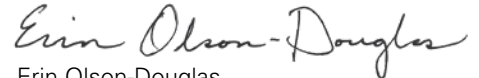
in. Do you have an idea for an event in your community but have no idea where to start? The *Pop-up! Toolkit* provides strategic and practical direction for pulling off a pop-up event in your community.

Our Farm to School and Early Care Coalition connects Iowa's food growers and producers to children in their school setting. The Coalition, created by CED's Food Systems team, fosters the local foods economy—its workforce, farmers, producers, market (young palates!)—while bolstering the community economies and linking to local agriculture.

What could matter more in a community than its resilience in the face of disasters! Our Food Systems team's research into food systems resilience started in Marshalltown,

then expanded nationwide, putting research into action in a way that matters to communities. This exploration of resiliency provided the researched communities with action plans to guide them in becoming stronger today and preparing for their future.

Finally, welcome to Esther Crompton, our new communications specialist! With Esther's expertise and capacity, we intend to broaden CED's communications to further our commitment to helping Iowa's community matters.



Erin Olson-Douglas
Program Director, Iowa State University
Extension and Outreach Community and
Economic Development

ISU EXTENSION AND OUTREACH CHAMPIONS COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN AMERICA'S FOOD SYSTEMS

By Esther Crompton | Communications Specialist

In Marshall County, Iowa, the dangers of a food system under threat became apparent as the community grappled with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, a derecho in 2020, and a tornado in 2018.

Infrastructure damage impeded residents' access to grocery stores, pantries, and other essential food sources. On the agricultural front, damages extended to crops, livestock, and farm infrastructure such as greenhouses, storage facilities, and equipment. Business closures escalated economic hardships and reduced access to vital necessities.

But Marshall County's experience is not unique. Communities across the United States are navigating similar threats.

Recognizing the need for resilient food systems, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach acted. Over three years, Courtney Long, Megan Kemp, and Kaley Hohenshell within the Food Systems Team, a part of Extension's Community and Economic Development and Agriculture and Natural Resources programs, embarked on a dual-purpose

project. The initiative served as Long's dissertation research and an Agricultural Marketing Resource (AgMRC) project that worked with five diverse communities nationwide to navigate their food system challenges. The study communities, which were selected based on unique threats to their food systems caused by COVID-19 and natural disasters, include the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, Washington and Benton Counties in Arkansas, Marshall County in Iowa, Bastrop County in Texas, and the territory of the US Virgin Islands.

"Our goal was to collaborate with each place-based community and local institutions to explore the impacts of COVID-19 and natural disasters on their food systems," said Long. "Through partnerships with numerous organizations and businesses, we assessed the impacts of these events, investigated consumer behaviors and interest in local and regional food systems, and identified the need for University Extension programs to be engaged in this area of work."

Each community received a snapshot report detailing key findings about community

values, local food interests, purchasing practices, the impacts of COVID-19 and climatic events, and strategies for enhancing resilience. With these insights, Long and her team worked closely with each community to develop specific action plans.

"Each community was provided a \$10,000 grant," Long said. "This funding kick-started various projects, ranging from facilitating cooperative business planning to implementing 'little free food pantries' and creating disaster scenario plans specific to food system collaborators."

The lessons learned from this research will continue to guide ISU Extension and Outreach and the communities it serves.

"The impact of our study goes beyond the immediate response to crises. It's about building long-term resilience and capacity within these communities by gauging stakeholder interest and utilizing components of local food systems," said Long.

For more information about the research and its findings, visit the [AgMRC website](https://www.agmrc.org/).

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FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GRANT BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN LOCAL FOODS AND IOWA FAMILIES

By Esther Crompton | Communications Specialist

The Iowa Farm to School and Early Care (F2SEC) Coalition is on a mission: to increase access to locally grown food and food education for children and families. By forging cross-sector partnerships, the coalition is advancing programs and policies in schools and Early Care and Education (ECE) settings such as preschools, childcare centers, family childcare homes, and Head Start programs.

Over the past three years, the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) Farm to ECE Implementation Grant (FIG) has bolstered the F2SEC Coalition endeavors.

Krista Smith, the Farm to Early Care and Education coordinator, said, "The grant has allowed us to positively impact 2,200 children, 27 ECEs, and 192 ECE professionals through a range of new and expanded programs and services."

Through the support of the ASPHN FIG, the F2SEC Coalition developed [Local Food Makes Cents](#), a grant program that incentivized ECE providers with a substantial \$43,000 in cost reimbursement to purchase local foods directly from farmers, farmers markets, or dedicated food hubs.

"Early childhood providers are keen on local food but face budgetary and networking challenges. This grant bridged that gap," said Smith.

The coalition also used the ASPHN FIG to expand the [Iowa Farm to School Producer Directory](#), connecting ECEs with local farmers and food producers.

"Through these initiatives and programs, we've connected early care and education settings with local food producers, introducing nutrient-rich, locally grown food to our children. These connections also give farmers, producers, and aggregators access to a vast market, which helps create jobs and strengthens local economies," said Smith.

FIG funds also enabled the F2SEC Coalition to host the Annual Farm to School and Early Care Conferences and update and expand statewide Farm to ECE Trainings, an effort that helped make learning accessible to all through virtual formats.

In addition to learning opportunities, funding from the ASPHN FIG was used to develop an equity plan for the F2SEC Coalition's Farm to ECE work. In a step toward community inclusion, the F2SEC Coalition used FIG funds to translate its [Choose Iowa Food of the Month Campaign](#), which spotlights locally grown food, into Spanish.

"The initiatives supported by the ASPHN FIG have benefited everyone, from students to local food producers.



A child enjoys local blueberries at Stratford Early Learning Center.

They're about community, economy, and connection. We're deeply grateful for the grant's transformative impact over the past three years and look forward to building on the seeds it has sown," Smith.

For more information, visit the [F2SEC Coalition website](#) (<https://www.iowafarmtoschoollearlycare.org/>).

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UNIT WELCOMES NEW COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

This summer, Esther Crompton joined the Community and Economic Development (CED) team of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach as a new communications specialist. With a background in organizational communication, multimedia design, qualitative research, and numerous writing genres, Crompton is a welcome addition to the team.

"I'm thrilled to be part of CED," said Crompton. "I'm committed to using my background and education to help CED better articulate our value to the communities we serve and reach those who can benefit from our assistance."

Crompton is working toward a PhD in rhetoric and professional communication at ISU, and she holds an MA in writing and a BA in English from Coastal Carolina University. In her past role as a communication assistant for the ISU Department of Chemical and

Biological Engineering she was responsible for various tasks, including managing publication projects, interviewing experts, crafting departmental stories, and overseeing webpage redesign. She also handled social media, created promotional materials, and assisted in communication planning for the department.

In her present role in CED, Crompton is engaged in several initiatives. She is employing her communication and qualitative research skills to assist CED in developing a strategic plan. She will also be revamping the CED website content and collaborating with her colleagues to identify and address their communication needs.

"I'm particularly excited about the strategic plan we're developing," Crompton said. "It's a great opportunity to shape the future of CED and ensure we're meeting the needs of our communities. I am looking forward

to using the development of this plan as an opportunity to create a data-driven communication plan that is directly informed by the needs of our stakeholders."



Beyond her professional life, Esther is an avid photographer with a particular fondness for landscapes and pets. She enjoys taking her dogs, Molly and Riley, on woodland adventures. A confessed podcast junkie, Esther enjoys discovering new podcasts while commuting and playing Pokémon Go.

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