By Abbie Gaffey, Community Development Specialist, and Sandra Oberbroeckling, Program Coordinator

The year 2008 will be remembered for disasters, both natural and man-made, including severe weather, the housing crisis and the credit crisis on Wall Street. For the many Iowans who suffered from tornadoes, flooding, or both, the most deeply felt impact was made by Mother Nature.

Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development (CED) offers services to help Iowans put their lives back together. Assistance in community visioning, economic analysis, geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, planning and zoning, community design, facilitation and public participation are available to communities that are ready to move forward.

Community Visioning

Community visioning is a participatory process using design tools to transform community ideas into concept plans that illustrate possibilities for built environments such as downtowns, neighborhoods and parks. Extension CED offers two visioning programs: The Institute for Design Research and Outreach (IDRO) Partnering Landscape and Community Enhancement (PLaCE) Program and the Iowa's Living Roadways (ILR) Community Visioning Program.

PLaCE pairs communities with student design classes to produce concept plans, feasibility studies and needs assessments for historic preservation, downtown revitalization, housing, parks and trails, and community comprehensive plans (www.design.iastate.edu/place.php).

Economic and Statistical Analyses

Extension economists help communities measure the economic impact of natural disasters on retail, agricultural and industrial businesses, community finances, population and the workforce, and delivery of community services. Information about latest community, regional, economic development and public policy analyses Extension programs is available at www.econ.iastate.edu/outreach/community/default/CommProg.asp.

Extension Community and Economic Development Assists in Disaster Recovery

State Representative Jeff Kaufman of Wilton gets a first-hand look at the damage to State Highway 6 in Muscatine County after the flooding.

The ILR Community Visioning Program is available to towns of fewer than 10,000 people. The program employs a participatory decision-making process to produce a community plan for landscape and transportation enhancements. The 2009 Community Visioning Program will focus on long-term planning in four to six communities affected by tornado damage and/or flooding. The program will guide these disaster visioning communities through a two-year, long-term planning process. This DOT-sponsored program is carried out by ISU and Trees Forever. For more information visit the Web site at www.communityvisioning.org.

The Regional Capacity Analysis Program (ReCAP) provides online access to community statistical and demographic data sets (www.recap.iastate.edu/).

Statistics in the Community (STATCOM) is a student-operated statistical advice continued on page 4
Dear Friends,

What makes Extension different? It’s in the name. In the state of Iowa, we are Iowa State UNIVERSITY Extension. Often referred to as the “Extension Service,” the adjective “university” is frequently omitted. But it is our attachment to and our role within the university that makes Extension Community and Economic Development unique in Iowa and around the world.

In all but a handful of countries, Extension Services are tied to their respective federal governments and not to a local university. In Iowa, program content is rarely driven by federal policy and mandates. Rather, it is the combination of local input and university research that drives our agenda. Almost 900 Iowans serve on County Extension Councils and hundreds more serve on a variety of advisory committees to provide public input and articulate local and state needs. But, what is truly unique about Extension is that it attempts to address those needs first and foremost with research and education through the university.

Allow me to suggest you read this quarter’s Community Matters newsletter through the viewpoint of Iowa State University. Applied and basic research continues to drive our agenda as ISU faculty, staff and students attempt to meet the needs of Iowans through Extension Community and Economic Development.

Applied research in landscape architecture drives the curriculum that is the foundation of the award-winning Community Visioning program, which has created community aesthetics enjoyed by RAGBRAI riders and has been designated as one of the 150 top contributions ever made at Iowa State University. Continuing research in retail economics has helped provide new community economic analysis tools online and to detail trends among such things as groceries in the state of Iowa. Research using spatial analysis and econometric modeling to test factors affecting local educational quality could well lead to Extension programming to help local school districts to better isolate district policies from socioeconomic factors in optimizing improvements in local schools.

While progress in community and economic development in Iowa is ultimately how we measure success, the importance of the manner in which we do so cannot be understated. Extension Community and Economic Development is an educational program. A significant part of our mission relates to our tie to university research and the diffusion of that research in a way that informs local decision-making.

And I’ll let you in on a little secret: through our USDA partners we are tied into the land-grant system across the country. So the research and Extension programming at Purdue, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin or Michigan State in many cases can be accessed as well.

As I like to remind staff and faculty, don’t forget, we are UNIVERSITY Extension.

Timothy O. Borich
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Iowa’s Small Communities May Be ‘Running Low on Groceries’

By Abbie Gafey
Community Development Specialist

In a 10 year period between 1995 and 2005, Iowa lost 676 grocery stores. More have been lost since then. Iowa’s towns may be “running low on groceries.”

That’s one of the conclusions of a new report titled “Small Town Grocers in Iowa: What does the future hold?” from Iowa State University’s Regional Capacity Analysis Program (ReCAP). Extension economist Meghan O’Brien authored the report, and has since heard feedback from several communities that are facing the loss of their local markets.

“I’ve probably gotten five grocery calls in the last week from smaller communities on the cusp of losing their grocery store,” O’Brien says, noting that the calls are coming from all over the state and not concentrated in any particular geographical region. “A lot of the towns seem to be in the 1,000 population range.”

The trend in calls matches the trends identified in the report. Grocery stores now need a higher population base to stay profitable at a time when population has dipped in many rural areas. “In 2000, the average population to maintain a grocery store was 2,843 while in 2005 it was 3,252. In Iowa’s 20 most rural counties during this same period population levels declined by 4%,” the report states.

Changes in commuting patterns and consumer habits have also had a negative impact on grocery stores in smaller communities. Often, residents buy groceries in the towns where they work that are sometimes 20–30 miles away from home. The number of supercenters and warehouses like Wal-Mart, Sam’s Club, Costco and Target have increased by 175 percent between 2000 and 2005 while the overall number of grocery stores in the state decreased by 53 percent since the mid-1990s.

Local grocery stores have found it increasingly difficult to compete with the “everyday low prices” offered to consumers at supercenters and warehouses. Other factors impacting the economic viability of a small grocery store include larger minimum orders required by grocery distributors and business succession to new generations of small town grocers.

“Small town residents fear the closing of their local grocery store for economic reasons as well as quality of life issues. This report looks at the factors influencing the viability of grocery stores as well as the impacts on communities and residents when the store is lost,” the report states.

O’Brien’s report points out that not all residents can travel to a city for their groceries. “I’m really concerned with how it will impact the elderly, in particular,” she said. The report goes into more detail: “The impact of not having a grocery store on the elderly is severe. For many elderly residents, driving is not an option and if they cannot shop locally then they are either forced to move or rely on others for their care. In either case the result is a reduction in their standard of living.”

Low-resource residents also rely more on local grocery stores. According to a May 2008 survey in Supermarket News, 56% of consumers with incomes under $35,000 are having difficulty buying the groceries they need. Since rural areas and small towns have lower incomes than the state average those figures suggest it will be increasingly difficult for people to not only buy locally in small towns but perhaps to even remain living there,” the report states.

O’Brien says there are ways local grocery stores can work on enhancing their competitiveness. One way is to engage the community in a dialogue about the importance of retaining a local grocery store, offering additional services, adding alcohol sales and more general merchandise, cooperating with local growers, and adjusting store hours to match commuter lifestyles.

Cooperatives and regional buying groups are two options that might help local grocery stores, but O’Brien cautions that long-term studies have not been done to indicate whether these are economically viable strategies for long-term sustainability.


Visioning Program Makes ISU’s Top 150

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

Question: What does Iowa’s Living Roadways Community Visioning Program have in common with quasicrystal research, food in space and elbow replacement in dogs?

Answer: This award-winning program is among the top 150 contributions made by Iowa State University during its 150-year history.

As part of its sesquicentennial celebration, ISU compiled a list of the top 150 contributions by faculty, staff, students and alumni that have benefited the state of Iowa, the country and the world. The list was published in the Summer 2008 issue of Visions, the ISU Alumni Association magazine, in a feature titled “150 Contributions: How Iowa State has changed the world.”

Community Visioning was created by landscape architecture professor Julia Badenhoop and has provided planning and landscape assistance to 149 small Iowa communities since 1996.

To learn more about the Visioning Program, visit the Web site at www.communityvisioning.org.
and expertise service for government and nonprofit organizations. (See related story below.)

**Community Mapping and GIS**
GIS is a way to produce maps with embedded statistical data for use in community planning to document impact and evaluate alternatives. ISU Extension employs Internet mapping tools to obtain public input for a variety of design and planning projects. To learn more contact Alan Jensen at 515-294-2073 or adjensen@iastate.edu, or Chris Seeger, 515-294-3648 or cjeeger@iastate.edu.

**Community Design**
IDRO can answer questions and offers design assistance resources in housing for the elderly, handicapped accessibility, historic preservation or architectural issues (www.design.iastate.edu/research.php).

ISU College of Design studio classes also offer assistance to communities in need. For example, Nadia Anderson, lecturer in the Department of Architecture, and her fifth-year architecture students are developing a prototype for prefabricated, low-cost housing in the Oakhill-Jackson neighborhood in Cedar Rapids.

**Planning and Zoning**
Understanding flood plain regulations, variances, conditional uses and planned urban development overlays is a first step in developing a comprehensive approach to redevelopment after a disaster. More information about planning and zoning services is available at www.design.iastate.edu/extension/planning.php.

**Facilitation and Strategic Planning**
Facilitation, consultation, technical assistance and strategic planning assistance are available to cities, counties, neighborhoods and nonprofit agencies serving communities affected by flooding. Help with identifying goals, setting priorities, forming community groups.

Fifth-year architecture students tour the Oakhill-Jackson neighborhood with Michael Richards, president of the Oakhill-Jackson Neighborhood Association.

and organizations and designing public participation processes is available from teams of trained facilitators. For information contact Abbie Gaffey at 712-251-8595 or agaffey@iastate.edu.

Information about all of ISU Extension CED programs is available at the Program Builder Web site at www.extension.iastate.edu/programbuilder/.

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**Student-operated Statistical Service Reaches Out to Iowa Communities**

By J. Gordon Arbuckle, Jr.
Assistant Professor of Sociology

Statistics in the Community, or STATCOM for short, offers statistical consulting services to community groups and organizations ranging from public libraries to city governments to non-profit organizations. Established by graduate students from Iowa State University's Department of Statistics, STATCOM is an affiliate of the STATCOM Network, a growing consortium of college and university-based groups that share their statistical expertise with communities in need.

“The premise of STATCOM is to provide statistical consulting to community groups, local governments and non-profits,” said Jon Hobbs, a member of the group's executive committee. “The service is pro bono, and it gives us consulting experience and gets us involved in interesting projects.”

Statistics graduate students Jessica Chapman and Jennifer Huckett formed ISU STATCOM in 2007. Other students quickly got on board and STATCOM soon had its first client. STATCOM students and faculty advisors had originally identified the Volunteer Center of Story County (VCSC), a group that connects volunteers with volunteer opportunities throughout Story County, as an organization that could help connect STATCOM with groups in its network that might be interested in statistical consulting. As it turned out, VCSC became STATCOM’s first client: with faculty assistance, the graduate students designed, conducted and analyzed an online survey that measured client satisfaction with VCSC’s services. Since that first project, STATCOM has worked on several similar survey projects with groups such as Story County’s Retired and Senior Volunteer program.

STATCOM is pursuing statewide projects as well, Hobbs explained. “We have a couple of projects coming up that we’re very excited about. We’re starting a project with Iowans for Voting Integrity, a group that works toward legislation on election auditing. The idea is to get statisticians more involved with election processes, in this case to integrate concepts of probability into post-election auditing. "The group is also exploring a project with the Iowa Lottery. “We would be looking at the statistical probability that there be multiple lottery wins at stores that sell lottery tickets,” said Tim Bancroft, also a member of STATCOM’s executive committee. “This would help the Lottery to spot potential fraud.”

STATCOM members are excited about working with Extension. “It legitimates STATCOM as an entity,” said Bancroft. “I feel like we’re part of what Extension is doing and that’s great.” STATCOM now has an entry on the ISU Extension Community and Economic Development Program Builder site, which the group hopes will lead to even more projects that serve Iowans’ needs while providing graduate students with valuable practical experience.

For more information visit the Program Builder Web site at www.extension.iastate.edu/programbuilder/ or contact Jon Hobbs at 515-294-3441 or jonhobbs@iastate.edu.
Communities Can ‘Take Charge’ of Their Futures with Extension Online Tool

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

As many Iowa communities face economic decline and disaster recovery, easy access to community development data is crucial. Community leaders need to make informed decisions that take into consideration existing conditions as well as recent social and economic trends.

With these issues in mind, Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development (CED) made a good resource better by revamping the Take Charge program, an economic development educational tool that provides indicators for analyzing local economic and social conditions. Take Charge reports can help local leaders examine current community trends and characteristics to better understand opportunities for economic growth.

Take Charge was developed by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development and came out in 1990 as a notebook. The materials explained where to find economic and demographic data for local areas and notes on how to use them in a community planning process focused on economic development.

Components of population change is one data set available on the Take Charge Web site. This graph compares the net migration in Jones County with that of its peer group and with the state of Iowa.

“About five years ago the secondary data used in the report was automated and put online,” said Dan Otto, ISU CED associate director and Extension economist and professor. “Communities nationwide were able to access and use the material for their community development processes,” he added.

With Take Charge, communities could easily identify sources for various types of data. However, users had to go to several information sources to obtain the data. To remove this stumbling block, the online version of Take Charge provides one-stop shopping. Because all the data were available through Take Charge, communities could spend more time working with the information instead of trying to find it, said Liesl Eathington, assistant scientist in the Economics Department and coordinator of the Regional Capacity Analysis Program (ReCAP). ReCAP provides economic, demographic and social data and analysis and houses Take Charge.

The new Take Charge, which is still a work in progress, expands on basic census data by offering not only the facts but analysis so that communities can benchmark themselves to similar towns or their performance over time, Eathington said. The site offers updated data for all of Iowa as well as the entire United States.

“When completed, the thrust of Take Charge will be facilitation,” said Eathington. Using the program, communities can examine three questions: 1) Where are we now? 2) Where do we want to be? and 3) How do we get there? In its current state, the information on the Web site will help communities answer the first question.

To access Take Charge, visit the ReCAP Web site at www.recap.iastate.edu and click on Take Charge under the Main menu.

ISU Extension Receives Awards During National Conference

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

Nearly 2,300 Extension professionals from across the country gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, September 15–19 for Galaxy III, a national Extension conference held every five years. The conference was an opportunity for Extension staff from all areas of expertise, including staff from Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development (CED), to network, share information about ongoing programs and identify new projects and partnerships.

ISU Extension was recognized for its participation in the Northwest Area Foundation’s Horizons Community Leadership Program to Reduce Poverty. The ISU Extension Horizons team received two teamwork awards: the 2008 Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) Teamwork Award and the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Excellence in Community Development Programming Award.

In addition, conference attendees learned more about what ISU Extension CED is doing for Iowa communities during three days of breakout sessions. ISU Extension CED staff presented five papers and two posters based on their work in Iowa.

Topics included visualizing and querying community survey data using online mapping, e-government readiness, the impact of rural development on secondary road systems, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) short course evaluation, using GIS to site feeding operations, interactive mapping and community trail and landscape design.

Donna Donald, Decatur County Extension family life field specialist; Brenda Schmitt, Cerro Gordo County Extension family resource management specialist; and Mary Beth Kaufmann, Shelby County Extension family resource management specialist accept the JCEP award on behalf of the ISU Extension Horizons team.
Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program Makes Route Come Alive for 2008 RAGBRAI Riders

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

Thanks to the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program, cyclists enjoyed a more beautiful Iowa during the 2008 Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI). This year's RAGBRAI route passed through 15 communities that are making Iowa's roads and towns more visually appealing and environmentally diverse by participating in this unique program.

Since 1996, the Visioning Program has provided 149 small Iowa communities access to professional landscape planning and design assistance. Through a series of planning meetings, a volunteer committee works with a Trees Forever facilitator, a professional landscape architect and a design team from Iowa State University to identify potential landscaping projects and to create images showing how finished projects might look.

The communities along the RAGBRAI route are a mixture of current communities that are still developing concept plans, recent communities, and communities that were some of the first to go through the process. Jefferson, for instance, was one of three communities that went through community visioning when the program was a pilot...
Come Alive for 2008 RAGBRAI Riders

The visioning communities and their Visioning Program years along the route from west to east are: Missouri Valley, Shelby, Harlan, Kimballton, Exira, Jefferson, Grand Junction, State Center, Le Grand, Toledo, Belle Plaine, North Liberty, Solon, Lisbon and Tipton. Two of these communities, Exira and Kimballton, participated in a corridor enhancement pilot program that applied the visioning program participatory design process to the U.S. Highway 71 corridor in Audubon County.

The types of completed projects that cyclists observed along the route include new entryway signage in Missouri Valley and Solon, roadside plantings in Exira, Jefferson, and Toledo, trail development in State Center, and downtown streetscaping in Lisbon.

The Visioning Program is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation in partnership with Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development and Trees Forever.

To learn more about the Visioning Program, visit the Web site at www.communityvisioning.org.

North Liberty (1999)
The entrance corridor into North Liberty is highlighted by a well-established prairie planting.

Belle Plaine (2008)
The concept plan for the west entryway into town, near U.S. 30, depicts the beautiful plains for which Belle Plaine is named. The wheel-like berms express the importance of transportation corridor history and present day uses.

Le Grand (2002)
A two-lane boulevard was proposed for Main Street after the completion of the U.S. 30 bypass of Le Grand.

State Center (2005)
This new entrance sign just north of U.S. 30 interchange celebrates the Center’s identity as the Rose Capital of Iowa.

Solon (2005)
Trees along the recreation trail and a bed of native vegetation beautify the view of the gateway into Solon.

Toledo (1999)
Street tree plantings along the Highway 63 corridor north of U.S. 30 make the entrance to Toledo more inviting and have a traffic calming effect.

Lisbon (1998)
Enhancements to the downtown streetscape in Lisbon include street trees, period lighting, planters, and curb bump-outs with brick pavers.

Tipton (2007)
The proposed city park entrance sign, landscaping and plantings are a top priority of the Tipton visioning committee.

Grand Junction (2008)
Its unique location at the intersection of two railroads brought prosperity to Grand Junction. This enhanced image of the old gas station and motel on the edge of town illustrates how a few feasible changes can highlight a small part of the town’s history.

Belle Plaine (2008)
The wheel-like berms express the importance of transportation corridor history and present day uses.

State Center (2005)
The new entrance sign just north of U.S. 30 interchange celebrates the Center’s identity as the Rose Capital of Iowa.

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Tipton (2007)
The proposed city park entrance sign, landscaping and plantings are a top priority of the Tipton visioning committee.
Community Development Specialists Receive On-The-Job History Lesson

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development (CED) specialists have had many opportunities over the years to facilitate group processes for a variety of individuals and organizations. However, they seldom have the opportunity for on-the-job learning about an important part of Iowa’s history.

In January 2008, the board of directors of the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center asked Frank Owens, Extension community development specialist, and Don Broshar, Extension youth and community development specialist, to help plan and facilitate a retreat. The first thing Owens and Broshar learned was that there is a national museum at the old Fort Des Moines Army Post. Next they learned that it had taken more than $10 million and 10 years to develop the museum.

The goal of the retreat was to help the board celebrate the past work of the board of directors and to help identify future directions. Owens and Broshar led the board members through an exercise of creating a history wall. “The object of the exercise was to identify the significant events, contributions, and experiences that had been involved in the creation of the museum in order to provide everyone with the same information,” Owens said. The history wall covered the years 1997–2007.

The board members were then asked to imagine living in the year 2013 and attending a board retreat to celebrate the accomplishments of the past five years. This process resulted in a word picture of the victories experienced by the board.

The board members identified the tasks that would need to be developed to identify the directions they should take to accomplish the victory and make their efforts a reality. This led to an in-depth discussion about the purpose of the museum and the board.

“Based on this rich and lengthy discussion about purpose, the board members developed a direction for both short- and long-term future planning,” said Owens.

The board decided to meet again during the month of January to review its progress and determine the next steps. Before ending the events of the day Broshar and Owens shared questions with the board members to help them continue to plan for the future.

Throughout this process, Owens and Broshar learned a great deal about Iowa’s significance in not only World Wars I and II but in the Civil Rights Movement as well.

The Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center was created to honor the U.S. Army’s first officer candidate class for African-American men in 1917 and the establishment of the first Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942.

In June of 1917, a school was opened at Fort Des Moines as a training camp for African-American officers. On October 12, 1917, more than 600 recruits from the Army Officer’s school earned commissions in the Army. There were 106 captains, 329 first lieutenants and 204 second lieutenants.

“When these African-American men assembled at Fort Des Moines, they did so during some of the darkest days of segregation,” said Owens. “Beyond the church pulpit and the schoolhouse, there were few opportunities for the development of black leadership in this country,” he added.

After the war, African-American graduates of Fort Des Moines—many of them decorated combat veterans—returned to their communities throughout the nation. As former Army officers, they were looked up to as leaders and role models. And this infusion of credentialed black men—trained to command and accustomed to action—became a springboard for the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1940s, 50s, and 60s.

With the outbreak of World War II, the government and military were slow to recognize the potential value of women in the armed forces. Action was not taken until after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Much of the opposition to women in the military was based on traditional notions of a woman’s place being the home. The possibility of women in combat had yet to become a reality.

With the realization that women serving in noncombat positions could free men for combat duty, as well as with pressure from influential women, Congress passed the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps bill on March 15, 1942. Women were not regular Army, yet they performed Army jobs. They went overseas, but did not have the same benefits as members of the Army if injured.

African-American women were allowed to join WAAC from the start. Ten percent of the first group of “WAACs” were black. However, the units and facilities were segregated.

“It was remarkable to learn that a portion of this nation’s civil rights history began in Des Moines, Iowa,” said Owens. “Planning the retreat was a real pleasure because it gave us the feeling that they too had an opportunity to contribute to the richness of our county’s history, he added.

To request ISU Extension CEDs facilitation services, visit the Program Builder Web site at www.extension.iastate.edu/programbuilder/ and click on Leadership and Organizational Development. For more information about the Fort Des Moines Museum, visit the Web site at www.fortdesmoines.org.
Extension GIS Specialist Takes Education Policy Research to a New Level

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

Rising education costs, shrinking budgets and lower enrollment in Iowa’s schools are fueling the debate over how best to educate our children. Is school district consolidation more cost effective than maintaining more small districts? Do students perform better in larger, more diverse educational environments? Can national- and state-level policy reforms be implemented equally effectively across local school districts?

Studies that compare education quality in school districts across states are scarce and the results are mixed. Furthermore, existing studies do not incorporate a way to detect the effects of geographic location and local community context on student achievement. These gaps in existing research are addressed in a spatial analysis study conducted by Monica Haddad, assistant professor and GIS (geographic information systems) Extension specialist in the Iowa State University Department of Community and Regional Planning, and Thomas Alsbury, associate professor in the North Carolina State University Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

The study, titled “Using Spatial Analyses to Examine Student Proficiency: Guiding District Consolidation and Reform Policy Decisions,” was published in the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of Planning and Changing, a journal focusing on educational leadership and policy studies. In it, Haddad and Alsbury use state-of-the-art spatial statistical and econometrics techniques to assess the factors that influence educational quality as measured by student test scores in school districts in Iowa and Illinois.

They examined the percentages of 8th grade students proficient in reading and proficient in math in the two states, while controlling for other variables, such as teacher quality, student/family demographics and class size. The sources for the data were the Illinois State Board of Education, the Iowa Department of Education and the 2000 census.

Controlling for spatial autocorrelation, Haddad and Alsbury were able to illustrate spatial trends using color coded maps (see figure). These maps show how low performing school districts are clustered in certain parts of each state while high performing districts are clustered in other parts.

The maps also revealed that clustering occurred as would be expected in some parts of the state—for example, low performing districts are located in high poverty, high minority areas, while high performing districts are located in wealthy areas. However, some clustering occurred in unexpected patterns. For instance, some high performing districts are clustered in poor, rural areas.

Based on the results of the spatial analyses, Haddad and Alsbury conclude that differentiated educational policy development, rather than national- or state-level policies, will be more effective in improving the quality of education. They also posit that geographic location should be incorporated in the study of student achievement at the district level to ensure that statewide school consolidation policies are better informed.

This study is part of an ongoing effort by Haddad to address the population decline in Iowa and in rural areas in particular. “The fact that Iowa’s rural areas have been losing population over the past decades struck me when I started working at ISU,” Haddad said. “As an Extension employee my long-term goal is to contribute to rural community development in order to start changing this persistent trend. It is well known that migration into a community may depend on amenities like school quality, public parks, roads or subsidies to recruit firms. Therefore, public intervention can affect the in-migration and out-migration processes.”

She conducted this study to better understand this Iowa phenomenon. “I decided to dedicate part of my Extension time to a project in which I could examine the relationship between school quality and public intervention with the objective of identifying different ways to improve quality of education for the rural areas,” Haddad said.

Data for this type of spatial analysis is plentiful and Haddad is able to conduct similar studies in any school district or region. Districts or regions that wish to make more informed educational policy reforms should contact Monica Haddad at 515-294-8979 or haddad@iastate.edu.
Value Added Ag Program Helps Iowans Retain More of the Food Dollar

By J. Gordon Arbuckle, Jr.
Assistant Professor of Sociology

What does it take to develop and market new products from traditional agricultural commodities? How can groups be organized to pursue potential opportunities in processing or otherwise adding value to agricultural products? Where can producers and processors learn about market niches that may be underserved? What mechanisms can producers, processors, and retailers use to develop market linkages across the state, region, and country?

The Value Added Agriculture Program (VAAP) has been addressing these important questions for close to a decade, helping producers, processor groups, and agriculture-based businesses to develop strategies that allow them to retain a greater percentage of the agricultural dollar by moving up the value chain through processing, branding, or other means.

Much of VAAP’s early work was in biofuels. The program supported producer efforts to develop both ethanol and biodiesel processing facilities with great success. While those projects focused primarily on facilities that produced less than 10 million gallons per year, a very small capacity by today’s standards, that work helped to lay the foundation for growth in the ethanol sector and the larger-scale plants of today.

Mary Holz-Clause, interim associate vice president for Extension and Outreach and VAAP program coordinator, explained: “Part of our mission is to assist initiatives such as ethanol early on, helping to find resources and supporting industry growth and development until things are up and running on their own.”

Other long-standing efforts include a focus on “niche pork,” or pork that is differentiated in some way—through social, environmental, breed, production practice, or other criteria—from pork that is produced in large-scale confinement operations. VAAP, along with partners such as the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, has worked with niche pork groups on business structure development, strategic planning, marketing, and networking with processors.

One of those groups is Eden Farms LLC, an Iowa-based corporation owned by 28 farm families. Now nationally known, Eden Farms raises and markets its Berkshire breed hogs across Iowa and the country.

Two relatively new, but related VAAP initiatives are winery and agritourism development. VAAP has provided significant support to Iowa’s rapidly expanding wine sector. The program conducts vineyard and winery feasibility studies, and has produced several short overview videos on wine production and marketing. One of the program’s most important contributions to the sector has been the development of financial feasibility worksheets that have had broad application. “These worksheets are used across the country” said VAAP program director Ray Hansen, “It’s a ten-year profit-loss calculator that helps people understand what cash flow might look like over time.”

Development of agritourism as an alternative agricultural enterprise is another area that the VAAP is pursuing. Working with partner organizations as varied as the Iowa Farm Bureau, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Iowa Department of Economic Development, and the Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, VAAP is promoting and supporting agritourism as one strategy toward diversification through farm-based enterprises such as bed and breakfasts, u-pick operations, trail riding, and farmers markets (www.visitiowafarms.org).

Since 2002, one of the VAAP’s most significant activities has been the management and development of the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC). The AgMRC serves as a national clearinghouse for information and contacts for all things value-added in agriculture (www.agmrc.org). Whether it’s information on value-added enterprises associated with agricultural products, business development services and advice, or market research, the VAAP-managed Web site provides people who are interested in exploring value-added possibilities with information and resources from local, national, and international perspectives.

One of VAAP’s newest initiatives is a Web-based networking and market research tool called Market Maker (www.marketmakertowa.com) that was developed at the University of Illinois and brought to Iowa by VAAP in partnership with the Leopold Center and AgMRC. This interactive mapping system allows businesses at any point in the food supply chain to obtain relevant market demographic data and find potential buyers, processors, or distributors of food products. Whether it’s an apple producer and processor seeking wholesale, retail, or direct marketing outlets for fresh apples and cider, a restaurant looking to source dried mushrooms, or a meat processor wanting to find producers of organic pork, Market Maker provides the product and contact information necessary to facilitate such exchanges. With ten states on board and more state Market Maker sites under development, this effort is well on its way to becoming a major networking resource for value-added agriculture across the state and region.

Ray Hansen is understandably excited about VAAP’s work, particularly the impacts that he sees in rural communities across Iowa. “We think the strength and backbone of Iowa’s economy are the businesses—large or small—that are well-grounded in local areas.” He said. “Any business that keeps dollars earned turning a while longer in Iowa communities is beneficial, especially in areas that have seen a declining population base.” By helping Iowans add value to agricultural products and facilitating market exchange, VAAP increases the percentage of the food dollar that remains in rural Iowa, contributing to rural economic growth and community development.

To learn more about ISU Extension’s Value Added Agriculture Program, visit the Web site: www.extension.iastate.edu/valueaddedag or call 515-294-9483.
Looking Back

Norm Riggs: ‘Democratic Brainstorming’ with Humor and Grace

By Sandra Oberbroeckling
Program Coordinator

Whether experimenting with a new program or keeping the peace at a contentious community meeting, Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development Specialist Norm Riggs approached challenges with curiosity, skill and a good sense of humor.

From 1975 to 2006, Riggs was a resource to communities and organizations in the areas of economic development, planning, public policy issues, to name just a few. His forte was in facilitation and mediation of decision-making processes.

Riggs describes his joining ISU Extension as “a twist of fate. I was the director of the Community Betterment Program—a recognition program for communities. Ron Powers was the director of Extension CED at the time and he was on our advisory board. Paul Coates called me to let me know there was a regional job that I might be interested in, so I applied,” Riggs said.

In 1971, Coates, now the director of the Office of State and Local Government Programs and associate professor in the ISU Department of Community and Regional Planning, shared an office with Riggs at the State Office of Planning and Programming (now the Iowa Department of Economic Development). “Norm is a fun person to be around because he likes to have a good time, but that didn’t interfere with his ability to get the job done,” Coates said. “A field specialist position opened in Des Moines so I called Norm because I thought he would be good at Extension,” said Coates, who had joined Extension two years earlier.

Fortunately for ISU Extension, as well as countless Iowa communities and organizations, Riggs enjoyed working for Extension enough to stay for 30 years. “I liked the eclectic nature of [my job]. A lot of it is applied research. It’s an on-your-feet job in the real world working with communities,” he said.

Riggs’ “baptism by fire” in facilitation took place in 1987 at a meeting in the Highland Park area in Des Moines. The meeting was very contentious, because at the time there were plans to close North High School. “Everybody was there, about 400 people—residents, school board members,” he said. “Miraculously, things didn’t explode. We were able to discuss other issues besides the school closing.”

This meeting was a turning point for Riggs. “The meeting took place mid-career and propelled me forward to come up with a format that I call ‘democratic brainstorming,’” he said. “It paved the way for developing my style.”

Riggs employed techniques such as the “Values Clothesline,” to get people to actively listen. Participants assign a score from 1 to 10 of a value-laden statement based on how much they agreed, stand on a continuum according to their scores and then explain why they are where they are. “My philosophy is if you talk at people for more than 10–15 minutes, their eyes start to glaze over. I like to spice it up with group interaction,” Riggs said.

Riggs considers the development of facilitation tools for decision making and the technique he used to train the trainers as his greatest accomplishments. He also enjoyed doing workshops on controversy and group dynamics.

“The most gratifying thing was the train the trainers that I did for county directors and [Extension to] Families people on how to use basic decision-making techniques. I was really glad when they grabbed the reins and didn’t call me to come facilitate meetings,” Riggs said. In this way Riggs empowered many other Extension staff.

Riggs grew up in Des Moines and spent his entire career in the Polk County area, so retiring to an acreage near North Ferrisburgh, Vermont, was a dramatic change of pace and scenery. However, he has immersed himself in gardening, travels, spends time with his grandchildren, and occasionally does consulting.

During his career, Riggs authored several publications and training manuals, many of which are still in use today, such as Facilitating for Results: A Task-Oriented Approach to Reaching Consensus and Taking Action.

Perhaps he was best known among his colleagues for his facilitation abilities. Alan Jensen, ISU Extension geospatial technology specialist, remembers the first time that he worked with Riggs. “I was teaching a studio class and we were doing a comprehensive plan for Boone. I asked Norm to facilitate the community input session because Jerry Knox [associate professor emeritus of community and regional planning] said he was the best you could get,” said Jensen. “When people disagreed, he disarmed them through humor and grace,” he added.

“Norm was innovative and he was willing to try almost anything. I always appreciated that because to me the essence of what Extension is about is trying new things and being innovators when helping communities to help themselves,” said Coates. “He is the prototype of what a community development specialist should be.”

The facilitation experiences that stand out most to Riggs involved a certain amount of controversy. For example, not long before he retired, Riggs spent a year facilitating community meetings in Ames regarding the Wolford Mall, which was a highly disputed issue in the community. “It was memorable but it was grueling,” he said.
Central Community Resources and Economic Development (CRED) planning roundtable held in Perry, Iowa, February 25–28, 2008. The roundtable, sponsored by Town/Craft and ISU Extension Community and Economic Development, was an effort to bring together all resources from the land-grant system to support the educational needs of the nation's diverse communities.

Included are presentations, panel discussions and facilitated group discussions by researchers and Extension program leaders from the North Central Region. A major focus of the meeting was on the gaps existing between the research base and Extension programming. Keynote speakers were Martin Holdrich, senior economist with Woods & Poole Economic, Inc., and David Sanger, White House correspondent for *The New York Times*.

This publication will be available from Extension online store in November.

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