



#STRONGIOWA

2021 IN PALO ALTO COUNTY

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach connects the needs of Iowans with Iowa State research and resources. We listen, learn, and work with the people of Palo Alto County for a #STRONGIOWA.



**Sustainable
ENVIRONMENTS**



**Thriving
COMMUNITIES**



**Resilient
PEOPLE**



**Future
LEADERS**



The Palo Alto 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.

Sue Haack

Extension Council Chair

Justin Kibbie

Council Member

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Council Member

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Council Member

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Council Member

Serving the People of Palo Alto 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 Palo Alto County. By bringing more opportunities for adults to feel a sense of belonging and connection to their communities, we work to instill a sense pride and commitment in these changing and challenging times.

During 2021 we focused on the following efforts:

- VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program
- 4-H workshops and Clover Kids programs/summer camps
- Manure applicator and CIC/P-CIC certifications
- Progressive Ag Farm Safety Day
- EPAK Alternative— "Ag Affects You" Classroom Kits
- On Their Own & OK Program

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: 2,300 Books Mailed

Since July of 2020, over 200 children have benefited from ISU Extension and Outreach's collaboration with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Palo Alto County.

As a part of our ongoing collaboration, families with children ages 0-5 years can register online anytime for FREE, age-appropriate, and high-quality books delivered on a monthly basis - right to their mailbox! To sign-up your eligible child[ren], ages 0-5, simply follow the link below to register online. There is no cost or limit to the number children who can be registered per family.

Register here: <https://bit.ly/PACbooks>

ISU Extension and Outreach Palo Alto County would like to thank the Arthur W. and Audrey F. Smith Foundation; Walmart Community Grants Team; Early Childhood North Central Iowa; Palo Alto County Gaming Development Corporation; ISU Extension and Outreach Council and Jamie Rouse, with the Emmetsburg Education Center, for the support and partnership in bringing this opportunity to Palo Alto County.

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Showcasing 4-H at the County Fair

The Palo Alto County Fair returned to a more normal fair in July of 2021, providing the opportunity for youth to demonstrate what they had learned through their 4-H project work over the past year.

On Tuesday, July 20th, Palo Alto County Extension and Outreach held their pre-fair static exhibit judging day. Thirteen judges from surrounding counties came to the Palo Alto County Fairgrounds to evaluate, educate, and encourage 4-Hers who prepared exhibits to showcase at the Palo Alto County Fair. Fifty seven 4-Hers brought in a total of 284 exhibits to be evaluated that day. Twenty of those exhibits were then selected to go on to the Iowa State Fair to be re-evaluated and displayed.

Palo Alto County also brought back the opportunity for Clover Kids (youth in grades K-3) to exhibit on the static exhibit judging day. Eighteen Clover Kids brought in 50 exhibits to be "judged" by a caring adult, basically introducing them to their first fair experience. All Clover Kids received an "awesome award" for each exhibit entered in the fair. This experience is offered to this age group of youth so they can begin to learn how to prepare an exhibit and how to communicate what they learned in the process. With this introduction it is our hope that the learning will continue into their 4-H years as they develop life skills in the areas of project mastery, communication, decision making, citizenship, and leadership.

Livestock shows were also back to normal at the Palo Alto County Fair with 69 4-Hers exhibiting 206 animals. Of those animals, 15 of them went on to be exhibited at the Iowa State Fair. Livestock shows included beef, sheep, swine, meat goat, horse, dog, rabbit, poultry, bucket/bottle animal, and pets. These shows give 4-Hers the opportunity to learn about caring for an animal, good production practices, how to prepare an animal for the show ring, and knowledge about



industry standards and marketing. For some youth it includes exploring a possible career choice.

Showcasing the hard work and learned life skills of our youth in the 4-H program is a major goal of the Palo Alto County Fair. Plans for the 2022 fair are already in progress with the dates set for July 21-24.

On Their Own & OK Program

On Wednesday, May 26th, ISU Extension & Outreach Palo Alto County offered the program "On Their Own & OK" for all youth completing grades 3-8 in the county. The program took place at the VFW in Emmetsburg from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Twenty-four youth participated in this program designed to strengthen skills in youth who may care for themselves and/or siblings during the afterschool/summer hours. The day was filled with good conversation, snack/lunch preparation, and a visit from a police officer. Parents received an accompanying guide featuring tips and resources for bolstering their child's confidence in staying home alone.

ISU Extension and Outreach Palo Alto County is looking forward to hosting additional opportunities to reach new families with this important educational offering.

Youth showcase their "Mysterious Paper" activity, to demonstrate how a group of people can hear exactly the same message, yet, interpret it differently.



Photos above include Palo Alto 4-Hers & Clover Kids showing at the Palo Alto and Iowa State fairs.

Working toward Recovery

As our state works toward recovery, ISU Extension and Outreach Palo Alto County has been supporting Iowans in **reviving the Iowa economy** including the farm economy.

ISU Extension Beef Specialist Beth Doran and Dairy Specialist Fred Hall partnered with the Iowa Lakes Community College in Emmetsburg to facilitate Boots in the Barn, a program geared toward women in the beef and dairy industries.

The program broke down into three sessions: February 10 and 24 and March 10. The first featured birthing the process with Dr. Catlin Messerschmidt and "Frosty" the birthing demonstration cow from the ISU Veterinary College. The second focused on calf nutrition and facilities with Dr. Doran and Fred Hall teaching selecting and evaluating colostrum, selecting and mixing milk replacers and weaning calves plus dealing with cold weather stress. ILCC instructors Stacey Jo Benson and Kelly Dodge taught preparing and administering colostrum, helping calves nurse and maternal and calf housing. The final program reviewed vaccines and health and how to determine whether an animal is healthy or unhealthy taught by Dr. Doran, Neal Williamson, Stacey Jo Benson and Kelly Dodge.

The 12 students participating in Boots in the Barn had hands-on training giving them new skills in birthing and calf management. The 13 women participating gained new skills or confidence in assisting in difficult births and managing calf feeding and animal health.



In our efforts to **improve financial security**, ISU Extension and Outreach in Palo Alto County provided free tax preparation services to low- and moderate-income families through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Special efforts were made to increase awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit, capture unclaimed stimulus credits and to encourage filers to save and spend tax refunds in ways that enhance family financial security.

Palo Alto County VITA volunteers helped 27 low-to-moderate income families complete and file their 2020 income tax returns. At an average cost of \$220 to file a Form 1040 with the standard deduction plus a state income tax return, the program saved Palo Alto County taxpayers \$5940 in prep and filing fees. Nearly 50% of VITA clients earned less than \$15,000 a year. According to the IRS, the average tax return was just over \$2,000 (not counting stimulus payments). For those clients earning \$15,000 or less, that's nearly 14% of their income back in their bank accounts.

ISU Extension and Outreach Palo Alto County has been working to **improve food supply, safety and access**. The Iowa Food Code requires every foodservice establishment have at least one Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM). The National Restaurant Association's

ServSafe® program is the national standard for this certification. In 2021, ISU Extension and Outreach Palo Alto County staff and Amy Jones, Food and Health Human Sciences Specialist, teamed up to overcome the challenges of COVID by implementing COVID-19 precautions (limiting class size, physical distancing, mask use and cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces) to hold face to face ServSafe class. In Palo Alto County eight out of nine people (89%) passed the certification exam. This quick response helped foodservice operations meet state food safety standards for re-opening during difficult times.

Looking ahead to 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Palo Alto County will continue to engage in the Emmetsburg Community Visioning Program, a collaborative effort of ISU Extension and Outreach, Trees Forever, the DOT. Events such as the Community Showcase, Fall Fest, and tree planting at the Emmetsburg High School (pictured right) are propelling new ideas and motivation for the planning process come, aligning with the city's and school's strategic plans revolving around beautification projects, creating inclusive spaces, and improved transportation efforts.



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