2022 IN JOHNSON COUNTY

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach provides research-based education and engages Iowans in solving today’s problems and preparing for a thriving future. We listen, learn, and work with the people of Johnson County for a #STRONGIOWA.

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF JOHNSON COUNTY

In 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Johnson County continued to engage Iowans in addressing mental health. Projects strived to provide access to research-based training and education on mental health including distribution of ‘Stress on the Farm’ publications.

We are thankful to Theisen’s and the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque for supporting Iowa State University Extension and Outreach of Johnson County. With the generosity of a 2021 Theisen’s More For Your Community Grant we were able to distribute ‘Thank you Farmers’ bags in Fall 2022. Johnson County Extension staff, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H youth members assembled and delivered care packages to 25 local farmers as a way to say thank you for all of their hard work supporting our community. We wish all farmers a successful and safe wrap up to this harvest season and time to relax before Spring. These care packages included items such as: supplies, snacks, safety accessories, and Extension resources. We appreciate our partners that made this happen and look forward to the possibility of growing this project in the future.

The Johnson 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.

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Iowa Extension Council Association

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach
Ag Exploration Day 2022

On Sept. 21st and 22nd southeast Iowa high school students participated in the Ag Exploration Day event held at the Southeast Iowa Research and Demonstration Farm near Crawfordsville. Approximately 250 students participated from 20 schools in this year’s event.

The goals of this event were to engage students in hands-on learning, get students excited to enter careers in agriculture, teach students skills they can use at home, and provide networking opportunities. Students rotated through 5 stations, learning about a variety of topics ranging from livestock and crops to agricultural manufacturing and horticulture. Additionally, students had the opportunity to visit with local community colleges (Kirkwood, Indian Hills, Eastern Iowa, and Southeast Iowa), ISU, and they also participated in a career panel with local industry leaders.

Students were asked to share what they thought about the day, and here is what they said:

- 97% shared that because of Ag Exploration Day, they were starting to think more about the type of education they needed in the future.
- 89% shared they learned about colleges that would be a good fit for them.
- 92% felt that the Ag Exploration Day helped them explore or think about future career pathways.

Johnson County schools that participated in Ag Exploration Day 2022 included Clear Creek Amana, Highland, Lone Tree, West Branch, and Williamsburg.

This event is offered annually at the Southeast Iowa Research and Demonstration Farm, and the event is made possible by the support and generosity of many local sponsors.

Southeast Research and Demonstration Farm

The Southeast Research and Demonstration Farm conducts agronomic (corn, soybeans, small grains, forage) research, demonstrations, and educational events relevant to Johnson County and 20 other counties in southeast Iowa. The farm, which is near Crawfordsville, is owned by the Southeast Iowa Agricultural Research Association (SEIARA) (which has members from all 21 counties), is operated by Iowa State University (ISU), and is co-managed by SEIARA and ISU. Ryan Hahn represents the interests of Johnson County on the SEIARA Board of Directors.

In 2019, SEIARA and ISU embarked on a project to fund and build a new state-of-the-art research and learning center. The fundraising kick-off occurred on March 5, 2020, and went into hibernation eight days later with the COVID-19 shut down. Fundraising resumed in 2021 and ground was broken in late 2021, although building costs had increased significantly during the shut-down. The first event conducted in the new facility was the building grand opening and also 35th anniversary celebration of the farm held on September 8, 2022. The second event was an ag career exploration event for high school students held on September 21 and 22, 2022. We hosted over 250 students between the two days from 20 different schools in SE Iowa.

SEIARA and ISU look forward continued improvement in the quality and quantity of research, demonstrations, and educational events conducted for the residents of Johnson County and the other 20 counties involved.
Health & Well-Being - With a New Name comes a Fresh Purpose

2022 brought an exciting change for the Pick a Better Snack program. Pick a Better Snack is now called Health & Well-Being. The name change more accurately describes the research-based lessons taught for building life-long skills for healthy living. These skills include physical, emotional, and mental well-being strategies. Along with teaching more traditional topics of the importance of the consumption of fruits and vegetables, daily exercise, and handwashing, there is now an added component focusing on mental health wellness. An updated and refreshed curriculum has brought more exciting learning opportunities for the 1,307 students served in Johnson County. 2022 also brought a return to teaching in the classroom in all 3 districts (Iowa City, Clear Creek Amana, and Lone Tree).

One teacher observation was that “students are actively applying what they learn in Health & Well-Being during the rest of their school day.” And many students are sharing that Health & Well-Being is helping them make more healthy choices at home with their families.

Equipping Food Pantries through a Monthly Food Pantry Newsletter

Pantries face several challenges to implement sustainable changes. They may be completely volunteer run or may have staff that cannot dedicate sufficient time, do not know reliable sources of information, and may not be ready for certain changes. Some strategies like implementing meal bundling, highlighting recipe cards, or utilizing shelf talkers can be hard and seem intimidating because of these conditions.

In response Brianna Montross, SNAP-Ed Healthy Food Access Specialist, coaches and empowers local food pantries to make the healthy choice the easy choice through policy, systems, and environmental changes. She created and e-mails the monthly newsletter the food pantries she serves that includes a video about an intervention strategy to improve the food pantry environment, a nutrition education flyer, a recipe connected with a meal bundle idea that aligns with what the food bank will have in stock that month, and an additional resource related to the video topic. This newsletter promotes consistent communication with pantries and relates the research from the university to applicable work in the community. This approach also promotes sustainability within the food pantry to make a change. Food pantries take leadership and ownership with implementing interventions when they can have consistent access to the materials and are encouraged to try new things.

As a result, this made materials accessible to all food pantries and gave an incentive to partner with Brianna for individualized coaching. When pantries are ready to implement changes, they can review the materials and videos related to the strategy to start initiating change right away. This helps food pantries save time and it encourages ownership of the changes. Food pantries have created a meal bundle/recipe center with the materials, started client choice at their pantry, implemented a food safety policy, and provided their volunteers with nutrition education because of this work.

www.extension.iastate.edu/johnson/food-pantry-resources

Serving Farmers of Johnson County

In 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Johnson County continued to support Iowans in reviving the Iowa economy, including the farm economy. Farmland is a limited resource for agricultural producers in Iowa, and 47.1% of Johnson County agricultural land is under some form of rental arrangement. With an aging landowner population and issues related to farmland changing year after year, leasing programs and the educational materials used in these programs are of great value to the clientele in our county and the landowners scattered across the country. In 2022, Johnson County hosted one of 74 locations for Farmland Leasing and Management workshops. As a result, small businesses, entrepreneurs, agribusinesses, landowners, and farmers increased their knowledge of leasing trends, legal issues, and methods for determining cash rental rates and creating more resilient leasing arrangements. One of the most common replies as to why individuals attend a meeting is to stay aware of trends and changes related to renting farmland. This year, 33.33% of attendees said they would raise the rent due to the information shared in the meeting.

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ServSafe Certified Food Protection Manager Course

ServSafe Certified Food Protection Manager Course is an 8-hour food safety training for foodservice managers and workers. The course was offered six times at the Johnson County Extension Office with a total of 114 participants attending in 2022. During the course, participants learn current best practices related to safe food handling and cleaning and sanitizing as well as tips on how to implement essential food safety practices and create a culture of food safety. The trainings were delivered by Human Sciences Food and Health Specialist, Sara Sprouse.

Food Safety for Events

During Food Safety for Events, participants learn best practices to ensure safe preparation and service of food. Objectives of the class include; explaining the common ways in which food becomes contaminated, listing the steps that need to be taken for safe food handling, explaining the rationale behind food safety practices, applying food safety principles when handling food at events, and evaluating food safety practices appropriate for their food events.

Eleven Iowa City Public Library staff members attended the program on Thursday, October 27th at the Iowa City Public Library. The training was delivered by Human Sciences Food and Health Specialist, Sara Sprouse. After training 100% of participants reported an increase in familiarity with strategies for providing safe food to the public. And 100% of participants reported they are “ Likely” or “Very likely” to use the food safety strategies discussed during the training.

Reaching our Youth in Johnson County

Johnson County youth programming empowers youth to be engaged contributors, outstanding communicators, effective leaders, and successful learners! 237 volunteers supported more than 3,000 K-12 youth that participated in clubs, school enrichment, after-school, camps, events, and mentoring throughout the 2021-2022 program year.

100% of 4-H Big Brothers Big Sisters after-school participants demonstrated improved or sustained positive behavior in two or more categories. Nearly 50% percent of youth report less depressive symptoms in BBBS 1:1 mentoring program. And the new BBBS Bridge program was created to meet the rising need of kids on the wait list for a caring adult BBBS mentor, includes monthly events that promote positive youth development.

Johnson County 4-H had a successful 4-H and FFA Fair that took place July 24-27, 2022. 4-H members excelled, showcasing their work in leadership, project areas, and community service from the previous year. There were 2,059 total entries in the fair, with 1,156 animal entries and 903 static (non-livestock) entries. The annual county fair brings together 4-H members and families from across the county to form friendships and share experiences.