

# BUILDING A #STRONGIOWA

## STAKEHOLDER REPORT 2022

### 2022 IN SIOUX 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 Sioux County for a #STRONGIOWA.



Mills presenting prior to Private Pesticide Training with Agronomist Joel DeJong.

**The Sioux 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.*

**Calvin Bomgaars**  
Council Member

**Jared Bomgaars**  
Council Member

**Daniel Borchers**  
Council Member

**Cheryl Buntsma**  
Council Member

**Brian Hooyer**  
Council Member

**Mark Pottebaum**  
Council Member

**Cathy Punt**  
Council Member

**Kevin Rehder**  
Council Member

**Bruce Schafer**  
Council Member

### SERVING THE PEOPLE OF SIOUX COUNTY WITH MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

In 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Sioux County continued its multi-year effort to engage Iowans in addressing mental health and to provide access to research-based training and education on mental health awareness and suicide prevention.

As one of the highest agriculture producing counties in the state and thanks to a grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, ISU Extension and Outreach Sioux County staff put special emphasis on supporting mental health for local farmers and farm families during 2022.

Research shows that suicide rates are higher among agricultural producers than most other occupations. Compared to the general population, agricultural producers are also more likely to face common mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. Add to this the fact that rural Iowa faces a huge shortage of mental health professionals, and one can easily see why our staff put their focus where they did.

Farm and Ranch Wellness Educator Donna Mills spent the year traveling throughout Sioux County and Northwest Iowa sharing mental health resources and stories of hope with over 200 direct contacts and well over 1,000 indirect contacts.

Our efforts also included having mental health resources available at every program we hosted, in all Extension disciplines, not just agriculture. Although we may never know if we had a significant impact, comments and reactions like the one below from clients give us hope that we have positively impacted our Sioux County farmers, families and communities.

"There were a few sessions that I had where someone would come up afterwards and say something like 'There was a guy that was sitting in this private pesticide applicator training, he attempted to take his own life several times already. So thank you,'" Mills shared.

## SHARING NUTRITION EDUCATION

Since the spring of 2022, our staff partnered with Hope Haven in Orange City to provide wellbeing education to adults with disabilities. Extension staff taught nutrition, food prep, physical activities, and provided coupons for participants to use on fresh produce at the local farmers market. This was followed by My Wellbeing, a program focused on social, emotional, financial and physical health that is specifically designed for neurodiverse people.

Equipped with a greater understanding of overall health, Hope Haven MyDay clients were encouraged toward volunteerism and community involvement. MyDay Manager Erin stated, "Each session was met with excitement from everyone who participated and it was great to see the relationships built between community and our members." Plans are to continue this partnership which will lead to more opportunities and learning in 2023.

## GROWING LOCAL HORTICULTURE

The Butterflies & Blossoms Garden outside the local Extension office has two primary target audiences - to educate the public about the value of native pollinator gardens and to give monarchs, other butterflies and pollinators a place to rest and refresh. The garden was expanded this year with about 30 new plants, adding native varieties not previously present.

The garden is still maturing in its second season but it is open and accessible to everyone. This year, it became a valuable learning platform for Hope Haven's MyDay group. Horticulture Intern Dustin Kohn, Master Gardener Coordinator Donna Mills and Engagement Assistant John Buntsma worked on the project.

Future plans include school tours and updated educational materials, including a booklet describing each plant, its value and growth.



Hope Haven clients learning in the Butterflies & Blossoms Garden.



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Regional Director



**Jackie Jiskoot**  
Office Assistant/  
Ag Program  
Coordinator



**Jade Bakker**  
County Youth  
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**Lucy Sanchez-Torres**  
K-12 Program  
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**Donna Mills**  
Farm and Ranch  
Wellness Educator/  
Master Gardener  
Coordinator



**John Buntsma**  
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**Anita Jeltema**  
Office Assistant/  
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**Kiley Biedenfeld**  
Marketing  
Coordinator

## EXPANDING YOUTH PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT

In the Fall of 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Sioux County welcomed two new faces to their 4-H and Youth Development team - Jade Bakker, of rural Granville, as the Sioux County Youth Coordinator, and Lucy Sanchez-Torres, of Hospers, as her counterpart, the K-12 Program Coordinator. Both women are dedicated to expanding educational opportunities with programs that spark interest, support academics, and promote resiliency.

"As a former 4-Her, this position interested me because I know how much of an impact being involved in 4-H had on me," Bakker said. "I look forward to helping kids navigate 4-H and watching them learn."

In addition to the 4-H program, Sanchez is excited to reach new audiences: "I am excited to work with local families and communities. I look forward to bringing my own strengths to this position to help children be successful and become the best version of themselves to make this world a better place. With my bilingual skills, I also hope to find new ways to reach out to more youth and families throughout Sioux County and Northwest Iowa."

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