



**#STRONGIOWA**

## 2021 IN CHEROKEE 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 Cherokee County for a #STRONGIOWA.



**Sustainable  
ENVIRONMENTS**



**Thriving  
COMMUNITIES**



**Resilient  
PEOPLE**



**Future  
LEADERS**

The Cherokee 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.**

**David Whited**

*Extension Council Chair*

**Jessica Kannegieter**

*Council Member*

**Donna Amundson**

*Council Member*

**Donna Kohn**

*Council Member*

**Jaden Ducommun**

*Council Member*

**Nancy Nelson**

*Council Member*

**Tiffany Ebert**

*Council Member*

**Sue Perrin**

*Council Member*

**Cindra Goodburn**

*Council Member*

## Serving the People of Cherokee 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 Cherokee County.

During 2021 we focused on the following efforts.

### Providing Traditional Ag Programming in New Ways

As COVID-19 continued to affect the area, we developed new ways to provide traditional pesticide, manure management and crop education trainings.

Early in the year, Cherokee County pesticide and manure management applicators attended in-person trainings, with several others taking advantage of the option to complete the required training virtually or individually at our office. As the year went on, ISU Extension and Outreach Cherokee County continued to work with farmers and members of the ag industry to provide needed programming, such as manure applicator training, a Farm Bill educational session, and a farmland leasing workshop.

Through it all, our staff had one main goal which was to give farmers and agribusiness representatives several options to complete required trainings and gain continuing education credits; therefore, doing our part to assure the consuming public of agriculture's commitment to providing a high-quality and safe food supply and a healthy environment to live in.



## **ISU Extension and Outreach Cherokee County Transitions as Long-time Program Coordinator Retires**

Mary Tuttle served as the Cherokee County Program Coordinator for over nine years.

As program coordinator, Tuttle worked diligently to bring new and innovative programs and opportunities to Cherokee County. She coordinated Annie's Project, Master Gardeners, Developing Dynamic Leaders and many more programs, while working collaboratively with other organizations to bring research-based resources and fun events to Cherokee County.

During her 9+ years, Tuttle developed many partnerships and always had Cherokee County opportunities, citizens, and betterment at the forefront of her mind.

August 12, 2021, was Tuttle's last day as Cherokee County Program Coordinator, with the future seeing her enjoying retirement and new ways of engaging with our community.

Following Tuttle's retirement, Office Assistant Jen Gaydo accepted the role of ag program coordinator, something that she had already been heavily involved in helping Tuttle with. Additionally, during the transition of advertising and hiring a new program coordinator, County Youth Coordinator Debbie Erpelding stepped in to temporarily fill the shoes and continue coordinating family wellness, food and health, and communities programs for ISU Extension and Outreach Cherokee County. Together, the two are working to see the needs and meet the needs of Cherokee County while also continuing to serve in their respective roles.

## **Meeting Local Communities' Needs as They Happen**

In the Spring of 2021, Emerald Ash Borer was confirmed in Cherokee County, and this was a big deal for many local homeowners. Our staff worked quickly to bring ISU specialists to Cherokee County in order to provide an educational learning session. ISU Extension and Outreach Forestry Specialist Jesse Randall led the session and provided needed information and resources to a packed room of local residents.

The program impacted residents in giving them guidelines of what they should and should not do if they suspect Emerald Ash Borer and shared research-based evidence of what to look for in identifying the pest and its effects on habitat.

## **Supporting Local Youth with Innovative In-School, Afterschool and Out-of-School Programs**

Partners In Excellence (PIE) is a community involvement program to empower learners to become contributing members in our changing world. The Cherokee Community Schools Elementary classrooms have partnered with local businesses to enhance the learning of students through a once-a-month program. Cherokee County Youth Coordinator Debbie Erpelding partners with Mrs. Freed's 4th grade classroom to lead once-a-month STEM activities with the students and engage them in youth development programs.

In early 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to limit some in-person programming. However, Erpelding did not let that stop her from providing innovative youth programming. Erpelding offered a STEM afterschool program, as well as a babysitter training afterschool program. Two opportunities which gave local youth the chance to continue hands-on learning in areas of interest, even after the school day ended.

September saw the return of Precision Ag and Animal Science Days after a brief COVID-19 hiatus in 2020. The program invited students to the Northwest Iowa Research Farm to explore precision agriculture and the sheep and swine industries with hands-on learning. Many Cherokee County schools attended, and reported that the event was beneficial and enlightening for students interested in pursuing careers in agriculture or any science or technology field.





## Offering Quality Youth Summer Programs and Showcasing 4-H at the County Fair

Following a year off from in-person summer camps due to COVID-19 restrictions, families in Cherokee County were excited for the opportunity to return to a summer filled with in-person youth summer camps and 4-H programs in 2021.

Throughout the summer, 230 youth attended 24 camps throughout Cherokee County. These camp participants dove into hands-on, innovative adventures in the areas of science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), robotics, cooking and the arts. Youth participants developed new skills and knowledge. Some examples include: food safety, safe kitchen skills, coding, Origami, meat science, video filming and editing, drone piloting and sewing, to name a few.

In addition to in-person summer camps, staff also offered nine different Clover Crates for youth who were unable or uncomfortable attending programs in person. Reaching all audiences is an important component of the Cherokee County Youth Development program and this allowed us to do so.

After a show-and-go year due to COVID-19 in 2020, the Cherokee County Fair returned in 2021 providing the opportunity for youth to demonstrate what they have learned through their 4-H project work over the past year.

Cherokee County is home to 161 4-H members with many of them participating at the Cherokee County Fair, whether that be showing livestock, performing in a communications event or exhibiting non-livestock projects.

In all areas of the fair, youth, families and volunteers were excited to showcase their hard work and return to a more normal fair. It was heartwarming to feel the community appreciation and support for the Cherokee County 4-H program and our members.



Top: Kaycee Leach, Aubrey Lucas and Naomi Riggert show off their wound wrapping skills during a vet science focused summer camp, which focused on veterinarian medicine and animal care.

Middle Left: Bryndalyn Brock and Lilah Gustafson sample a snack recipes during one of the cooking camps offered this summer.

Middle Right: Sam Schmiller braces his wether lamb during the Cherokee County Fair Lamb Show.

Bottom: Cherokee County Fair Queen Contestants and 4-H members Caitlin Ebert and Jessica Tuttle enjoy helping at the rabbit show.

## Working toward Recovery

As our state works toward recovery, ISU Extension and Outreach Cherokee County has been supporting efforts to increase access to quality child care.

During 2021, our staff completed research and needs assessment to assess what Cherokee County has in terms of child care strengths and what is needed to better support the industry in the coming years.

Additionally, staff hosted multiple babysitter trainings throughout the year. These workshops are for tweens and teens who are just entering the babysitting workforce. They focus on child-appropriate activities and snacks, emergency preparedness and additional babysitting skills. While attending and completing the training, youth strengthen the skills and knowledge which are needed to be a reliable babysitter. This provides another option for families who need child care in the evenings, on the weekends or during the summer months.

Looking ahead to 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Cherokee County will continue to engage in the conversation and make efforts to improve access to quality child care in Cherokee County.

Plans are currently underway to host child care provider trainings where they matter - at the local child care centers. Staff will have the opportunity to take part in hands-on trainings and gain credit hours right in their own work environment with their coworkers.

Additionally, our staff is communicating with the Cherokee County Board of Supervisors and Economic Development team to discuss child care needs and how we can work together to solve problems. We are also in the early stages of working with community partners on the Childcare Challenge Funding Awards, which is a part of the governor's Future Ready Iowa plan.

## Local Cherokee County Extension Staff



**Terry Janssen**  
*Regional Director*



**Jen Gaydo**  
*Office Assistant  
& Ag Program  
Coordinator*



**Debbie Erpelding**  
*County Youth  
Coordinator*



**Kiley Biedenfeld**  
*Marketing  
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## Regional Specialists Serving Our Area

**Beth Bunkers** *Youth Program Specialist housed in Orange City*  
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