



## 2021 IN CLAY 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 Clay County for a #STRONGIOWA.



**Sustainable  
ENVIRONMENTS**



**Thriving  
COMMUNITIES**



**Resilient  
PEOPLE**



**Future  
LEADERS**

The Clay 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.*

**Gary Johnson**

*Extension Council Chair*

**Dirk Benson**

*Council Member*

**Liz Biedenfeld**

*Council Member*

**Amy Maurer Cooke**

*Council Member*

**Bill Follon**

*Council Member*

**Sarah Frederick**

*Council Member*

**Renee Juza**

*Council Member*

**Jarrett Smith**

*Council Member*

**Teresa Steuben**

*Council Member*

## Serving the People of Clay 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 Clay County. During 2021 we focused on the following efforts.

### Providing Traditional Agriculture Programs and Education Using New Delivery Methods

As COVID-19 continued to affect the area, we developed new ways to provide traditional pesticide, manure management and crop education trainings. Producers were able to take advantage of virtual offerings, as well as small group and individual sessions hosted socially-distanced in our office. Additionally, we promoted many of the new virtual education options from ISU specialists, such as CropsTV for online agronomy education and the Iowa Beef Center's educational videos from beef specialists statewide.

One unique program that we hosted this year happened as a result of client request. In early-2020, after completing the "Annie's Project" women in ag program, a few local women requested more equine education. As a result, this year we hosted the "Women Managing Horses" four-session program which focused on equine nutrition, marketing, health and management. Twelve women participated in the course which was offered in a hybrid manner, meaning participants could attend in person or join virtually.



## New Program at the Clay County Fair Highlights Manufacturing Careers

Local schools and Clay County fairgoers had a new event to check out at the 2021 Clay County Fair. ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County partnered with the Northwest Iowa Manufacturing Sector to host a Manufacturing Expo at the Clay County Fair.

The free event at the 4-H Auditorium was open to 5-12th graders and their families on Friday “Kid’s Day” of the fair.

Local manufacturing businesses were invited to set up hands-on displays to engage students in learning about the industry and encourage youth to consider a career in manufacturing.

In total nearly 500 fairgoers attended the Manufacturing Expo with 9 schools making the event into a day-long field trip to the fair. Youth had the opportunity to try their hand at virtual welding, simulated painting and much more.



## Expanding Youth Programs

Seeing the impact that the school shutdown and pandemic had on youth, ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County’s youth staff team made leaps and bounds in expanding and diversifying their youth program offering.

Clover Kids, a once-a-month afterschool program for Kindergarten through 3rd graders, grew to encompass 5 schools around Clay County. Prior to the pandemic, the program was only offered in partnership with 2 schools.

AgSciting and SciCiting, programs for 3rd and 4th graders to explore agriculture at the Clay County Fair, saw its highest participant numbers ever with approximately 1,300 youth attending from 16 regional schools.

In-school programs also expanded in 2021 with our staff providing Ag in the Classroom sessions for Kindergarten through 4th graders and Ricochet programming for 7th and 8th graders throughout the county. Teachers were extremely grateful for ISU Extension and Outreach’s partnership in teaching students hands-on agriculture education and leadership development in a fun and engaging way.

This growth and expansion was all in addition to Clay County’s already strong 4-H program and Special Interest (Spln) events which take place throughout the whole year.

## Expanding Ease of Access to Information for Clients

ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County works hard to ensure that they are not “the best kept secret” in local communities. Staff write a newspaper column for the local *Spencer Daily Reporter* and run weekly radio spots with Spencer Radio Group.

Additionally, with the current transition to an updated website platform, staff also felt the need to explore additional options of reaching 4-H families. The traditional weekly Clover Notes email newsletter was proving to be less effective than in previous years, so in late 2021, staff began building a county-specific 4-H app which allows touch-of-a-finger access to events and information. Additionally, staff can send a “push notification” when deadlines or events are nearing.

The goal in doing these things is to fulfill the ISU Extension and Outreach mission of providing research-based resources to Clay County in ways that are easily accessible to current clients and any member of the general public.

## Showcasing 4-H and Agriculture at the Clay County Fair

The World's Greatest County Fair returned in 2021, providing the opportunity for youth to demonstrate what they have learned through their 4-H project over the past year. New developments for 4-H at the Clay County Fair included:

- The District 4-H/FFA Swine Show opening registration to the entire state of Minnesota, in addition to what was previously only Iowa, and a few counties in Nebraska and South Dakota.
- The new Farm Nutrients Small Animal Barn opened which allowed for more space and improved shows and educational events for both rabbits and poultry.

In total, 708 4-H and FFA youth exhibited at the Clay County Fair, whether that be through livestock exhibits or non-livestock and communication projects. Of those youth, a total of 42 counties were represented from Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota.



*Top:* Clay County 4-H members accept their awards for being in the top ten in the Beef of Merit Contest at the Clay County Fair.

*Bottom Left:* Office Manager Michele Hogrefe and 4-H Livestock Coordinator Amy Forrette award long-time swine volunteer Greg Lear with a gift for being 4-H Mentor of the Day at the Clay County Fair.

*Bottom right:* Sage Weber and Violet Sangwin showcase the sweet treats they made while competing in Clay County 4-H's Cupcake Wars.

In addition to the 4-H and youth focus at the fair, ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County also tried to highlight agriculture education, as well as some ISU Extension and Outreach focused programs in mental health and parenting.

In total, 10 signs and banners were displayed throughout the fairgrounds providing fairgoers with research-based agriculture facts about beef cattle, dairy cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine, poultry, rabbits and crop production. This was done as an effort to provide ag education to all people, from kids to adults, as well as support the local agriculture industries that continue to donate their time, money and talents to the 4-H and Youth Development program. Staff members also chose to highlight two key areas of Extension that they felt were relevant to the time and area, and impactful for fairgoers. The signs read:

- Parents can provide love and limits to help their children grow into strong, successful adults.
- Choosing to ask someone directly about their suicidal feelings will often lower the person's anxiety level and can prevent a death by suicide.

All of these signs were easily visible to the fair's 277,389 attendees, and staff hopes they left a lasting impact.

## DID YOU KNOW? HORSES

- Horses sleep standing up.
- The average horse lives to 25 years of age, with many living beyond 30.
- Horses are measured in hands, with each hand equaling 4 inches.



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## Working toward Recovery

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

In 2021, we have focused on the following efforts.

### Increasing Opportunities for Adult Education and Family Activities Outside of the Home or Workplace

ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County has offered:

- Women Managing Horses
- An “Egg-Cellent” Family Story Walk
- Healthy Cooking with Fresh Herbs
- Tall Corn Days Story Walk
- Bite By the Barn: An Adult Ag Education Program

All of these programs in one way or another encouraged community members to get out into local communities, learn new things, develop healthy habits and visit small businesses.

### Supporting Local Businesses in Finding Employees and Providing Quality Customer Service

In an effort to support local businesses, we teamed up with three other counties to create the Sip & See summer-long program which encouraged people to visit local restaurants, wineries and breweries across a four-county area.

Our office also hosted a Customer Service Workshop for Frontline employees in November. Participating business members discovered best practices for attracting and retaining customers through the “Five Steps of Excellent Customer Service.”

Lastly, ISU Extension and Outreach coordinated the first-ever Manufacturing Expo at the Clay County Fair, an event for 5th-12th grade youth, which we hope will have long-term effects in terms of future employees within the manufacturing industry.

## Offering Educational Programs and Resources to Assist Community Members with Financial Management

ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County offered “Money Smart: Prioritizing Bills, Managing Debt and Improving Credit” to help residents learn about key financial terms and money management.

### Continued Efforts in 2022 to Support and Strengthen the Iowa Economy

Looking ahead to 2022, plans are underway to host more adult workshops related to agriculture and the environment, community development, families, finances and food. Additionally, ISU Extension and Outreach Clay County staff are currently seeking training to enable our office to become a VITA Tax Site, in an effort to provide additional financial resources to local residents.

### Extension Staff



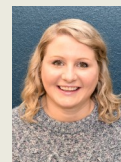
**Beth Frankenstein**  
*Regional Director*



**Michele Hogrefe**  
*Office Manager*



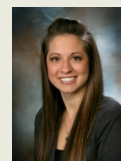
**Sarah Dirks**  
*Adult Program Coordinator*



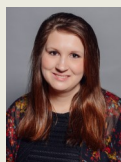
**Kelli Ireland**  
*Office Assistant*



**Isabel Dehrkoop**  
*4-H County Youth Program Coordinator*



**Amy Forrette**  
*4-H Livestock Coordinator / K-12 Educator*



**Kiley Biedenfeld**  
*Marketing Coordinator*

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