



2021 IN O'BRIEN 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 O'Brien County for a #STRONGIOWA.



**Sustainable
ENVIRONMENTS**



**Thriving
COMMUNITIES**



**Resilient
PEOPLE**



**Future
LEADERS**



The O'Brien 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.

Ron McCarty

Extension Council Chair

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Serving the People of O'Brien 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 O'Brien County. During 2021 we focused on the following efforts.

Partnering with Local School Districts to Provide Innovative Hands-On Learning to All Ages of Students

Coming out of remote learning, County Youth Coordinator Sarah Fiddelke and K-12 Educator Kate Stewart saw a real need for innovative hands-on learning, as well as social skill and leadership development in O'Brien County classrooms.

Because farm and ranch families comprise less than two percent of the U.S. population, local school districts were especially interested in agriculture education for elementary students. This led to a pilot program in dairy education, Adopt A Cow, and a return of the popular chick hatching program. Both multi-session programs enable students to explore life cycles and where food comes from, as well as learn other STEM and agriculture concepts. Combined, 15 classrooms, home to 279 youth, participated in these agriculture programs.

Early September saw the return of Precision Agriculture and Animal Science Days, three days of hands-on learning for high school agriculture education students, a program that began in 2014 and went on a brief COVID-19 hiatus in 2020.

O'Brien County 4-H Hall of Fame Recipient also Long-Time ISU Extension and Outreach Staff Member: Marsha Rehder

Marsha Rehder's coworkers would be the first to tell you that she never seeks praise or recognition, but that is exactly what she deserved and received in 2021.

Rehder's involvement with the O'Brien County 4-H program spans more than 20 years, helping both professionally and personally.

Serving as the office assistant for ISU Extension and Outreach O'Brien County means that Rehder is answering 4-H members' questions and assisting the local 4-H youth staff on a daily basis, especially during 4-H enrollment and county fair season.

In addition, Rehder's three grown children were active members of Sutherland's G&W Feeders 4-H club, which led to her involvement as both a parent volunteer and 4-H club leader.

Rehder wholeheartedly supports and works toward 4-H's vision of preparing youth to be successful, contributing members of society and for this reason, she received induction into the Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame in 2021.



Returning in 2021, the program invited students to the Northwest Iowa Research Farm to explore precision agriculture and the sheep and swine industries. Teachers and students reported that the event was beneficial and enlightening for students planning to pursue careers in agriculture or any STEM field.

In the fall, Fiddelke and Stewart brought Ricochet, a leadership development program to the Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn middle school, facilitating hands-on leadership development with 170 youth in 5th through 8th grade.

Traditional Ag Programming Delivered 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, hundreds of O'Brien 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 O'Brien County continued to work with farmers and members of the ag industry to reach our main goal - to give farmers and agribusiness representatives multiple options to complete their required trainings and gain continuing education. Therefore doing our part to assure the consuming public of agriculture's commitment to providing a high-quality safe food supply and a healthy environment to live in.

Expanding Horticulture Education, Produce Donations and Food Safety in O'Brien County

The Master Gardener program continues to grow in O'Brien County, as does our reach in providing horticulture education and garden experiences to residents. With a youth garden in Primghar and a community garden in Sanborn, our staff and local Master Gardeners were able to provide hands-on horticulture learning to youth through adults, donate fresh produce to local food pantries, and host ServSafe® Certified Food Protection training in Sheldon for area food managers and employees.

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 O'Brien County were very excited for the opportunity to return to a summer filled with normal youth and 4-H programming in 2021.

Throughout the summer, 257 youth attended 26 camps throughout O'Brien 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 summer camp programs, the O'Brien 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.

O'Brien County is home to 150 4-H members with many of them participating at the O'Brien County Fair. 4-H members exhibited livestock, performed in Share the Fun and communication events, modeled their clothing projects at the fashion revue, showcased non-livestock projects and ultimately, supported their friends and fellow O'Brien County 4-H and FFA members.



Top Left: A blindfolded Abby Woodall pushes Andrew Beck in the wheelbarrow through an obstacle course during the youth council's Farm Olympics.

Top Right: Lydia Husted models her clothing exhibit during the fashion revue.

Bottom: Junior Emma Vander Berg talks with the judge as she learns that she will be awarded Overall Sheep Showman at the 2021 O'Brien County Fair.

Bottom Left: Knox Klein exhibits his calf during the Clover Kids Bucket Calf Show.

In 2020, the fair consisted of socially-distanced come-and-go livestock shows and static exhibit judging, but 2021 gave way to a return to normal, and O'Brien County residents turned out in full force to support the 4-H and Clover Kids program. Local 4-H families were both excited and thankful for the opportunity to showcase their hard work and return to a more normal fair.

One particular highlight of the O'Brien County Fair that pulled huge crowds this year were the Clover Kids livestock shows. This is an opportunity for youth who have completed Kindergarten through 3rd grade to exhibit a bucket calf, lamb, goat or chicken at the O'Brien County Fair. But it is not just the youth who have fun. Parents, siblings and extended family members also get involved, which is a testament to the past, present and future of the O'Brien County 4-H program.

Working toward Recovery

As our state works toward recovery, ISU Extension and Outreach O'Brien County has been engaging Iowans in addressing mental health and supporting efforts to increase access to quality child care.

All our staff members have completed "Question. Persuade. Refer" suicide prevention training, as well as "Mental Health First Aid." We always provide Iowa Concern Hotline cards to all program participants, no matter the content, in an effort to directly market these helpful hotlines related to mental health and daily life.

Our staff strives to promote online child care provider training resources and the Science of Parenting podcast, while communicating with local child care providers frequently.

During ISU Extension and Outreach Week, our staff gifted local child care providers with appreciation care packages full of child care resources and helpful program information. We communicate with both licensed and non-licensed providers to complete needs assessments and see how we can best serve this industry in our county.

We also hosted "Babysitting Basics" for teen and tween youth who are starting to babysit. The workshop focuses on appropriate child care based on ages, emergency preparedness, and much more, and is beneficial in many ways. The first being babysitters are well trained and dependable, so parents/guardians feel comfortable hiring them. Secondly, it helps address child care needs, especially afterschool, on the weekends and throughout the summer. Lastly, the babysitters have a new sense of responsibility and more opportunities to help.

Looking ahead to 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach O'Brien County will continue to support efforts to increase access to quality child care and engage Iowans in addressing mental health.

In addressing the need for increased access to quality child care, our staff will continue to promote the online child care provider trainings and stay in contact with local child care centers. This communication enables us to know when a new training or additional resources are needed by O'Brien County child care centers and programs.

Additionally, O'Brien County will be one of six launching pads in Iowa to utilize a new mental health wellness federal grant. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) will partner with ISU Extension and Outreach to help raise awareness about mental health and wellness resources and help make them more accessible to farmers and rural communities. Through the grant, ISU Extension and Outreach staff will offer community outreach and programming to individuals involved in agriculture and those who support them. We will promote programs focused on strengthening families, and farmer resource packets will be available with information on how to access stress assistance, wellness, and family finance programming.

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