2020 IN BENTON 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 Benton County for a #STRONGIOWA:

Sustainable ENVIRONMENTS  Thriving COMMUNITIES  Resilient PEOPLE  Future LEADERS

Serving the People of Benton County

ISU Extension and Outreach Benton County began 2020 focused on education, training, farm bill, and budget planning. We started the year strong with:

- Commercial and Private Applicators continuing ed
- Planning youth program for 3rd Grade Ag Day in May
- Partnering with USDA-FSA on updates to the new farm bill via producer meetings (pictured below left)
- Beef producer Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training

It was our second year partnering with Old School Produce. They were granted non-profit status for providing free food to families, especially important during COVID. We donated produce to 3100 families through 11 food pantries.

Adjusting to the Pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic changed daily life, ISU Extension and Outreach prioritized health and safety as we developed new ways to bring research-based education to the people of Benton County. We remained open for business in order to educate, engage, and serve Iowans.
Following a special council meeting in early March, we closed to public traffic, rotating one staff member at the office while others worked remotely.

Staff returned to the office in May. In June, we re-opened to the public, posting signs explaining our COVID restrictions.

Instead of Summer Science Discovery Camp we created STEM kits, delivered to local libraries for scheduled pick-ups. We promoted ISU virtual Ag programming.

Providing a County Fair Experience

Although the traditional fair was not possible because of the pandemic, ISU Extension and Outreach Benton County worked with our partners to provide an alternate experience, the 4-H and FFA Livestock Event.

- Held 12 livestock shows & static events
- Limited attendance by allowing 8 people per exhibitor. Collected contact information while requesting masks and social distancing.

Parents and grandparents repeatedly expressed gratitude for enabling youth to show off their hard work.

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In a quick effort to support farmers and our community, ISU Extension and Outreach Benton County organized:

- Ag storm damage meeting provided information from ISU Ag Extension experts. Attended by 140+ farmers
- Benton County Assistance Fair connected families to more than 20 local non-profits and organizations providing recovery services
- Farmer Appreciation Fridays, sponsored by Cargill, shared lunches and information with 150 farmers.

Planning for Recovery

ISU Extension and Outreach Benton County is determined to help Iowans help each other. Looking ahead to 2021, we will focus additional efforts to revive our economy. We're planning community and economic programs, financial education, and mental health training.

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