



BUILDING A #STRONGIOWA

2019 IN CASS 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 Cass County for a #STRONGIOWA.

Cass County Extension Council

Every Iowa county has an elected extension council that guides local educational programming by partnering with staff. From needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of outcomes, the council represents the issues and people of the county.

The Cass County council is responsible for identifying local issues as priority topics, to ensure current and future programming meets the needs of Cass County residents in the Four Extension Priority Program Areas:

- Economic Development
- Food and the Environment
- Health and Well-being
- K12 Youth Outreach



Cass County Leadership Academy Takes Off

Leadership with local flair! Cass County Extension was excited to partner with the Atlantic Area Chamber of Commerce and the Cass Atlantic Development Corporation to start the “Leading Cass County” leadership development program in 2019. Focused on “Place-Based Leadership”, Leading Cass County is a program designed to identify, cultivate and direct up and coming leaders in our local communities. Mixing traditional leadership development skills with an in-depth look at the key components that help rural



2019 Cass County Extension Council Members

We want our local communities and producers to thrive, and families and children to be healthy. And eventually we want to turn the world over to the next generation better than we found it.

Brad Pellett
Extension Council Chair

Darrin Petty
Council Vice Chair

Julie Aupperle
Council Member

Brooke Blessington
Regional Director

Marcy Jo Dorsey
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Chad Becker
Council Member

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Jody Steffen
Council Member

Kristi Plagman
Council Member

Dave York
Council Member



Wellness Coordinator Role to Emphasize Partnership: Brigham Hoegh joins Cass County Extension in New Role in 2019

As of November 2019, a new face could be found at the Extension Office as Brigham Hoegh began her new role as the Wellness Program Coordinator at Cass County Extension. The Cass County Wellness Coordinator role is a new part-time, multi-partner funded position that will serve as a connector and bridge builder in the county between local groups focused on community health and wellness initiatives.

In this new role, Hoegh will be involved in projects across the county including assisting with community events, infrastructure and implementation projects, food systems development, and educational programming. Hoegh will help build capacity for programming, expand partnerships and serve as a resource for Cass County communities and organizations.

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communities thrive, the program gives participants skills they can utilize to grow both professionally and as leaders within the broader community.

Beginning in September of 2019, seventeen participants started their leadership journey, attending monthly leadership skills training classes in the morning, and learning more about the resources of Cass County in the afternoon through interactive speakers and tours. Topics covered early in the program included local government, agriculture, healthcare and community organizations. By the time the series wraps up in early 2020, participants will have learned more about economic development and our local education systems as well.

Class members will also have the opportunity to make a visit to state leadership in Des Moines and identify a local issue that they would like to help impact, before they become the first graduating class from the program in April.

Leading Communities is a research-based program developed by ISU Extension and Outreach and the University of Wisconsin Extension. It is designed to teach community members the skills they need for interacting and working together to promote sustainable community development. The program was delivered in Cass County through a partnership with ISU Extension and Outreach Community and Economic development staff.

Hands-On STEM Engages Youth Creativity

From welding to felting, and painting to engineering design, Cass County youth got Hands-On with STEM in 2019!

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) is a great way for youth to develop creativity, expand their skills in problem-solving and teamwork, and learn how the world around them works. Cass County Extension offered a variety of hands-on STEM learning opportunities in 2019, many in partnership with other local youth-serving





organizations. After school science activities were held at the Nishna Valley Family YMCA, Griswold Library, and through the Griswold after school REACH program. Meeting approximately once a month, youth in these programs explored everything from robots to making pumpkin slime.

Summer programs focusing on topics from gardening to space exploration were held in libraries, parks and other locations throughout the summer, with over 150 youth participating in at least one program.

Finally, several local and regional learning opportunities were offered to youth interested in learning more about a specific area of STEM. A welding and ag mechanics workshop was held at a local welding shop, in conjunction with the Bucket of Junk contest at the county fair. An Animal Science and Livestock Showmanship clinic held in June had over 40 youth attend to get hands-on experience working with large animals.

In addition, the Speak Out for Agriculture regional program added a hands-on learning workshop in advance of the trip in June where over 30 middle-and high-school aged youth learned about careers in agriculture and life sciences. Cass County also partnered with others 7 other counties in Southwest Iowa to host the first SWAG (Southwest Iowa Ag) learning day targeted to high school youth focus on agricultural sciences, which was attended by over 150 youth from across Southwest Iowa.



Top Right—youth attend a welding workshop in March 2019 to learn hands-on design skills at Weirich Welding Plus in Lewis.

Above— Patrick Hatting leads discussion at a grain marketing meeting

A Focus on Farm Financial Management in a Difficult Year

Patrick Hatting began his role as Farm Management Specialist for Southwest Iowa in early 2019, and had a busy year of meeting and informational programs as producers continue to deal with uncertainty in the ag sector due to weather, tariffs and markets. In August, Cass County hosted a Farmland Leasing information meeting, one of many put on around the state by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Over 30 producers were in attendance to learn about current issues related to farmland ownership, management and leasing arrangements. Among the resources provided to attendees was information on the Ag Decision Maker leasing website, which provides useful materials for negotiating leases, information on various types of leases, lease forms and newly updated Decision Tools

In December, Hatting co-hosted a meeting with the Cass County USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) on the 2020 Farm Bill and Farm Financial Decisions making.

27 local producers and landlords attended to learn more about the program election/enrollment process regarding the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and/or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) commodity crop programs.

Also in December, Hatting kicked off a 4 month Grain Marketing meeting series to help local producers learn more about the different aspects of marketing grain. The initial meeting, titled “How to Get \$4 Corn: Learn Crop



Marketing from Start to Finish”, focused on creating a full 18-month marketing plan to help producers understand the big picture of effectively marketing their crop. 46 local grain producers attended the meeting, led by Ed Kordick of Iowa Farm Bureau.

Healthy Eating for All

Healthy food can mean many things. For some it’s nutritional value, for some it’s safety, and for some it’s finding a balance of nutrition and taste. Whatever the definition, Cass County Extension offered a variety of programs throughout 2019 to help local residents get the most out of their meals.

Locals who dine out will be glad to know that over 30 local food establishment employees were certified through the 8 hour ServSafe program, to ensure they have a good understanding of safe food handling practices.

Thirteen local childcare providers gained skills in offering a nutritious, balanced meal to our youngest residents, no matter how picky. The program “I Only Want a Peanut Butter Sandwich” teaches childcare professionals about eating habits that are normal for young children, strategies that promote healthy eating habits, and how to foster pleasant mealtime experiences. The class also counts for professional development credits to help providers maintain their licensing status.

And while we know that local produce always tastes best fresh, individuals interested in extending the benefit from the summer produce were introduced to a variety of methods to keep food in the “Food Preservation 101” class in early July. From freezing to pickling to pressure canning, participants got a chance to learn the benefits and challenges of each method, pick up recipes and tips for their favorite produce, get hands-on with food preservation equipment, and ask plenty of questions of our Human Sciences Nutrition and Wellness specialist Barb Fuller!

In addition to classes and programs, Extension staff were present at many community events throughout the year sharing Extension Nutrition and Wellness resources such as the calendars, cookbooks, water bottles and more that are pictured at right.

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