



#STRONGIOWA

2020 IN CERRO GORDO 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 Cerro Gordo County for a #STRONGIOWA:

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Sustainable ENVIRONMENTS
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Thriving COMMUNITIES
- 

Resilient PEOPLE
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Future LEADERS



This team received fourth place at the National Western Roundup Horse Judging Competition. (Photo by Spencer Orr)

4-H Horse Judging Places Fourth at National Competition

In January, Cerro Gordo County 4-H members traveled to Denver, Colorado, to compete in the National Western Roundup Horse Judging Competition representing our county and the state of Iowa. The team consisted of Olivia Brcka, Gracie Gerbus, Emma Frohling, Jessica Theobald and alternates Paige Rolling and Sydney Williams. The team was coached by Spencer Orr.

Cerro Gordo County's 4-H team was fourth overall at the National Western Roundup. The team placed reserve champion in performance placings, third team overall in oral reasons, and sixth team overall in halter judging. Team member Olivia Brcka placed third overall as an individual with a fifth-place finish individually in performance judging and sixth place individually in both halter and oral reasons.

The Cerro Gordo 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.

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Left: Olivia Brcka placed third overall and is pictured with her parents Holly and Kent. Right is the full team of Emma, Paige, Jess, Gracie, Sydney, and Olivia. (Photo by Spencer Orr)

Gracie Gerbus and Emma Frohling also placed in the top 20 individually overall.

Coach Spencer Orr is “very proud of the young team. The team had some unique circumstances once we qualified for the National Western. The team overcame most of those throughout the months of practicing. They were very dedicated and kept preparing, although we could not meet in person all the time. This dedication made me, as a coach, very impressed.”

Oliva Brcka commented on the experience by saying she “is very grateful to have the opportunity to represent our state so well. I am very thankful for my teammates, coach, and the families that made the trip possible and enjoyable. I could not have asked for a better experience!”

Cerro Gordo 4-H Club Organizes a Fun Winter Club Activity

This article was submitted by club member Jackson Morud.

On Sunday, Jan. 26, the Cerro Gordo Explorers 4-H Club met at Lime Creek Nature Center for our monthly meeting. Our club voted to go snowshoeing. We did this last year and had so much fun that we wanted to do it again. Lime Creek has snowshoes that we were able to borrow for the afternoon.

We used the trails on the open prairie and ended up having a snowball fight. It was a



Members of Cerro Gordo County Explorers 4-H Club pledge their health to better living by participating in snowshoeing.



Members of CC Riders 4-H Club display their wood duck house projects to focus on wildlife habitat for wood ducks.

beautiful day with not much wind, so a great day to be outside! A volunteer made a fire for us to warm up around when we returned to the nature center. We also spent time exploring the inside of the nature center and checked out the new exhibits. I’m thankful for Lime Creek because it is a fun place to explore and learn about nature.

For our next meeting, we will be making popcorn balls to take to the fire station and have a tour.

Cerro Gordo 4-H Club Learns About Habitat and Helps Wood Ducks

On March 8, members of the CC Riders 4-H Club made wood duck habitats with the help of the Ventura Department of Natural Resources. Participants learned that these boxes are important because they provide a safe habitat for the wood ducks to raise their babies. Hailey Beatty, club member and a junior at Clear Lake High School, described some of the aspects that were important to include while making the habitats. She mentioned having an entrance just large enough for the ducks to get in and out without being followed by predators, an elongated roof to protect the animals from harsh sunlight and rain, and small holes in the top of the box to help with ventilation. “My favorite part was building the habitats, but all of it was very interesting to learn about. We got to watch videos of ducklings inside the box. That was really cool.” Beatty said.

Haley Jackson, another CC Riders member and a sophomore at Clear Lake High School, explained, “The boxes are important because they help the ducks have safe places to lay their eggs, and then I can see more of them outdoors.” Both girls mentioned that the workshop was very

Staff Spotlight:

Summer intern wraps up summer programming



Kylee Smith served as the 2020 summer intern for ISU Extension and Outreach Cerro Gordo County. Kylee is a student pursuing an agricultural and life sciences education

degree at Iowa State University.

Kylee's worked on many tasks at the North Iowa Fair, from set up and tear down to recording and editing videos for the 4-H Facebook page. Kylee assisted Maya Rowe, county youth coordinator, with fun workshops, including a dog workshop to prepare 4-H'ers for the North Iowa Fair Dog Show. Maya and Kylee also recorded a video for the Science of BBQ event.

Kylee also assisted with Garden Club at Lincoln Intermediate School in Mason City, with several students participating. Lessons consisted of soil science, pollinators and insects, how plants reproduce and spread seeds, and another lesson with a guest speaker about bees.

Kylee led a Harvest-Gather-Share Team of fifth and sixth graders at Central Gardens of North Iowa in Clear Lake. She assisted in lessons on food insecurity, organic gardening, plant propagation, and soil sciences. The team was able to sell their items at the Clear Lake Farmers Market on Aug. 1, making a profit on what they grew.

Kylee enjoyed growing many relationships in the office and in the community, and appreciated the opportunity to serve.

To learn more about how to become an intern, contact Maya Rowe, county youth coordinator, 641-423-0844.

educational and a lot of fun.

To see more activities offered by 4-H, follow Cerro Gordo County 4-H on Facebook.

This story was contributed by youth intern Olivia Brcka.

Mason City-CAN Supports Mohawk Market

Jeanette Cink, LCAN coordinator for Mason City, announced that leftover funds from their Iowa College Aid grant will be used to provide food for families in need via the Mohawk Market in Mason City. Nearly \$4,000 in leftover LCAN funding will be used to purchase food for the market.

The Mohawk Market is a mini-grocery service/ food bank at Mason City's Roosevelt School created by teachers Sasha Holstad and Tara Truex. More than half of Roosevelt students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

The market was working well until the COVID-19 pandemic struck and families could no longer access the market. Then teacher Renee Bergman, Roosevelt Principal Dan Arjes, and the school's emergency response team stepped up to turn the Mohawk Market into a grocery delivery service.

They have partnered with Grace Evangelical Free Church for help with fundraising and with Cerro Gordo County Emergency Management for volunteer staffing. Extension staff helped to deliver meals from May to August.

VITA Provides Tax Prep Services

For the past several years Cerro Gordo County has offered the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to qualified individuals in the county. The goal in 2020 was to prepare 500 returns, which was 100 more than the previous year. The lofty goal was set because there were eight new volunteers for a total of 12 tax preparers and four support staff. The program offers free basic tax return preparation to qualified individuals who generally make \$56,000 or less; are persons with



Michelle Schubert and Maya Rowe delivering meals to Mohawk Market students during the COVID-19 pandemic.



disabilities; and who are limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. Providing the program to the community is a team effort, led by Family Finance Specialist Brenda Schmitt and assisted by volunteers and Cerro Gordo County staff.

Before COVID-19 hit, about 400 returns were prepared. Nearly 100 more were completed after implementing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The program couldn't run without volunteers dedicated to helping people during the COVID-19 lockdown.

According to the National Society of Accountants, the average cost of tax preparation for 2020 was \$176. The VITA program helped area low-income wage earners save more than \$84,650 in tax preparation fees.

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 Cerro Gordo County. We remained open for business and we continued to educate, engage, and serve Iowans.



County Fair Does Show-and-Go

Postponing the 2020 County Fair didn't keep Cerro Gordo County 4-H members from figuring out a way to participate and stay



Livestock were "show and go" at the 2020 North Iowa Fair. 4-H members brought their livestock to the fairgrounds and took them home after exhibiting to practice safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Above are exhibitors at the beef show.

safe from COVID-19. Although this fair was completely different than previous years, it was still a success!

There was a great turnout for youth participating in the static exhibits. The communications and wardrobe events worked wonderfully both in person and via Zoom. Both participants and judges used a variety of protective measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including social distancing, face coverings, and face shields during their activities.

The livestock shows ran smoothly and very quickly. Extension staff would like to thank everyone for their support throughout the fair. We would also like to thank the volunteers and superintendents that made it possible.

Congratulations to all the exhibitors that qualified for 4-H Show Iowa, as well as all the livestock participants willing to take their hard work down to the 2020 Iowa 4-H and FFA Livestock Shows.

Cerro Gordo County Displays Programs at Clear Lake Downtown

Recently Cerro Gordo County staff met in downtown Clear Lake to assemble a display to highlight activities offered by its office for Harvest Festival. The goal of the activity was to promote its programs and services to those shopping in downtown Clear Lake. The event was sponsored by Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce.

Cerro Gordo ServSafe® Proves Essential for Workers

ServSafe® is the food safety certification course developed by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation offered by Amy Jones, nutrition and wellness specialist. ISU Extension and Outreach Cerro Gordo County



Staff decorated a light pole in downtown Clear Lake to inform residents about extension programs.



Master Gardener programming moved to completely virtual for 2020 for the safety of our 21 Cerro Gordo County students.

hosted six classes during 2020. Thirty-seven food service workers attended the training with 28 passing the certification to date.



New Master Gardeners for 2020

The Master Gardener program is for people who are passionate about volunteering and gardening. No previous garden knowledge is required. The program equips volunteers to grow in knowledge about gardening best practices. After the training, Master Gardeners volunteer in their community, making significant contributions such as giving produce to food banks for food security and making Iowa's fairgrounds and main streets beautiful.



Master Gardener training sessions focused on animal ecology, botany, composting, entomology, fruit culture, herbaceous ornamentals, houseplants, integrated pest management, sustainable landscape design, pesticides, plant pathology, propagation, soils, trees and shrubs, turfgrass management, vegetables and herbs, and weed science. We had a great group of 21 individuals from across North Iowa and Cerro Gordo County that met on Zoom due to COVID-19.

Planning for Recovery

ISU Extension and Outreach Cerro Gordo County is determined to help lowans help each other. Looking ahead to 2021, we will:

1. *Expand educational opportunities for youth.*
2. *Engage lowans in addressing mental health.*
3. *Revive the Iowa economy.*
4. *Support lowans in improving financial security.*
5. *Support efforts to increase access to quality childcare.*
6. *Engage lowans in improving food supply, safety and access.*

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