



BUILDING A #STRONGIOWA

2019 IN PLYMOUTH 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 Plymouth County for a #STRONGIOWA.

Plymouth 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.

We have identified these local issues as priority topics for current and future programming:

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



Economic Development

During the summer of 2019 Plymouth and Woodbury Counties introduced a new free youth program: Power of Produce (PoP Club). PoP Club was held at the Akron Farmers Market in Plymouth County six times for six consecutive weeks. The program is designed for children ages 4-12. Each participant received a reusable shopping bag and \$2 market tokens each week to be spent on fresh produce at the Akron Farmers Market. The PoP Club also provided a new, fun activity every week for families to do



Extension Council Members

We want communities and farmers 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.

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Program Spotlight:



Stay Independent

A Healthy Aging Series was offered at two locations in Akron and Kingsley, reaching 18 participants. The series of four lessons focuses on healthy eating and physical activity. Participants reported increasing fruit and vegetable intake and eating meals, not just snacks. One participant stated, "I don't like sweet potatoes or red peppers, but when I tasted them roasted, I really liked them. The week after the class I bought vegetables and made a big pan of roasted vegetables."

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together such as planting seeds in a compostable egg carton shell, making smoothies with a blender bike and painting rocks for garden décor. Along with each activity the children were able to sample a fruit or vegetable. They were asked three questions: Do you like it? Have you had it before? Will you try it again?.

"The Incentives actually made my daughter try new veggies that I normally wouldn't be able to get her to take a bite of before she said she didn't like it", shared an Akron PoP Club family parent.

In addition to youth learning about new produce, the PoP Club was beneficial to farmers market vendors. The increased attendance means potentially increasing the market's customer base and vendor revenues. Experience from other markets indicates families with children enrolled in PoP Club tend to make purchases in addition to their children's \$2 tokens. Based on the surveys filled out by families, they reported spending a little more on produce at the market after attending PoP Club.

The four main goals of PoP Club were to improve the eating behavior of children, increase family attendance at farmers markets, increase customer base and revenue for vendors and build healthy and prospering communities. The program offers a chance for families to explore farmers markets and learn about produce, how it is grown, and connect with local famers.

Health and Well-Being

Growing older is the greatest risk factor for acquiring Parkinson's disease and many people live with symptoms for several years before being diagnosed. Often people in early stages of Parkinson's disease assume their symptoms are part of normal aging or are due to other health problems they may have, such as arthritis. However, early Parkinson's disease symptoms may not be that apparent and may even come and go. Frequently it is the spouse or other relatives who first notice slight problems with a loved one's movements.





A Journey Through Parkinson's Disease was a three session series which included interactive lessons, discussions, and activities. Participants learned about the signs of Parkinson's disease and how to seek medical care, the cause of the disease and how specific treatments work, and alternative therapies and in-home activities that can delay the progression of Parkinson's disease.

After completing the course, one participant stated, "I now have an understanding of why the brain affects so many things in Parkinson's. It was so helpful." Another said, "I will keep on moving anytime I can and I now know what I can do to lessen the symptoms."

Food and Environment

Conservation is an important part of Iowa's environment. The Master Conservationist Training was brought to Plymouth, Woodbury, and Monona Counties in the fall of 2019 in which 14 participants took part in the class.

"The goal of the program is to create a community of passionate conservationists who are engaged in local communities, advocating for conservation practices and policies that ensure a sustainable future for Iowa's landscape", according to Adam Janke, assistant professor and extension wildlife specialist at Iowa State.

Highlights from the seven week class were



ISU Extension and Outreach's 2019 Master Conservationist class visited Broken Kettle Grasslands and learned about Iowa's natural prairies from Scott Moats of the Nature Conservancy.

traveling through the Loess Hills of Plymouth, Woodbury and Monona counties. Highlights from the seven week class were traveling through the Loess Hills of Plymouth, Woodbury and Monona counties. Participants were able to learn hands on touring farmland, learning about the watersheds, viewing bison, hiking through forests, and exploring prairie systems.

"I'm glad I took the Master Conservationist course," shared one participant. "I've learned valuable information about the soils and natural areas that surround us and can now be a better steward of these amazing natural resources so they are healthy and productive for the next generation."

The vision behind this training is to gather a community of trained Iowans that are knowledgeable about conservation challenges and opportunities, equipped with resources to communicate about conservation in Iowa, and connected to a local network of passionate conservationists and educators.

This training class was a partnership between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and local naturalists in all three counties. This is the first time this class has been offered since the early 2000's in this area.



K-12 Youth Outreach

A new poultry project was introduced to Plymouth County 4-H members this year called *Coop Conspiracy, the Mystery Chick Project*. The goal of this project was to encourage more youth to participate in the poultry project, learn the steps to raising chicks, and be able to bring an exhibit to the Plymouth County Fair. Members signed up to receive four chicks: a pullet and cockerel of two different breeds. An informational meeting held where participants learned how to build the environment for the chicks to come home and then how to transition them to a coop. As the chicks grew, members conducted their own research to figure out which two breeds of birds they had. They then submitted pictures to the Plymouth County ISU Extension and Outreach office monthly and reported on the progress or any struggles they were having. They then entered at least two of their birds in the fair and brought a presentation to showcase the special project during the show. Seven 4-H'ers participated in the first coop conspiracy. Members reported enjoying the challenge of determining which breed they had and also preparing them to start laying eggs. This project has been a great way for members to begin to build their own flock.

More than 160,000 youth participated in 4-H across the state last year, an 18.7 percent increase from 2017-2018. This includes youth who enrolled in Clover kids (for K-3 youth). In Plymouth County there are 18 active 4-H clubs with 423 4-H members and 203 Clover kids. 4-H connects with almost 1 in 5 Iowa K-12 students building learning and leadership skills so they're ready for college and careers.

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