BUILDING A #STRONGIOWA

2019 IN WRIGHT 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 Wright County for a #STRONGIOWA.

Wright 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:

- Small business management
- Food safety
- Water quality
- Youth programming

Economic Development

Wright County Extension and Outreach coordinated **VITA** (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) in Wright County with modest support from grant funding. Four IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers served 95 taxpayers at a Clarion site during the 2018 filing season, bringing over $155,000 in refunds into the community, including $41,000 in federal and state Earned Income Credit.

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.

Molly Wilson
Extension Council Chair

Jerry Chizek
Regional Director

Rodney Legleiter
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Grant Woodley
Council Member

Breanna Wagner
Council Member

Paige Grandgeorge
Council Member

Kevin Hadley
Council Member

Rhonda Benton
Council Member

Master Conservationist

Region 7 held a Master Conservationist seven-week program in the spring with 14 participants. This program created a community of passionate conservationists that will be engaged in local communities advocating for conservation practices and policies to ensure a sustainable future for Iowa's landscape. "Planting the seeds of conservation" was done by connecting local conservation leaders with natural resource professionals, extension educators, and fellow conservationists that can work together to conserve Iowa's natural resources. The program took place at different locations within Hamilton, Humboldt, Webster, and Wright counties, providing participants with hands-on interaction showing the diversity of the state's natural resources. Participants are now able to make informed choices for leading and educating others to improve conservation in Iowa. One participant noted, "Conservation matters to me because I feel that it is important to be sure that we can pass on an environment that is healthy and diverse and to have soils that continue to be productive for generations." Another said, "Land is fundamental to life as a human. It is also fundamental to my profession as a farmer and farm manager. It gives everything to us, and we must respect it."

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In April, Wright County Economic Development and ISU Extension and Outreach in Wright County invited Extension's Community and Economic Development (CED) specialists to present the **Iowa Retail Initiative Champions** workshop to community leaders in the county. The Champions workshop provided best practices on supporting local retailers, including conducting a commercial district building and business inventory. As an outgrowth of the workshop, CED returned to Wright County in the fall to work with the communities of Belmond, Clarion, and Eagle Grove in inventorying a four-block section of their commercial retail districts as part of the IRI Snapshot program. Community members were trained in using Fulcrum, a geolocating and surveying software application and provided instruction on gathering building information through on-the-ground data collection. Residents collected information on building and storefront vacancies, building characteristics, and perceived building quality. This first-hand knowledge was combined with building information pulled from the Wright County Assessor's Office, including assessed property value and ownership patterns. Communities have a limited pool of time and resources. The IRI Snapshot identified common points of concern with buildings (such as the need to clear out trash and debris from vacant storefronts), which buildings required immediate attention to prevent further, rapid deterioration, and which downtown assets played off of each other to further strengthen the retail district.

Health and Well-Being

The Wright County Ministerial Association approached ISU Extension and Outreach with a desire to go beyond providing monetary assistance to families in need. They wanted to go a step further and help these families build skills to make better use of their funds. Extension identified the "**Your Money, Your Goals**" financial empowerment toolkit as a valuable resource and provided a one-day training for nine local individuals,

equipping them to use the toolkit to assist individuals who seek to make good use of their money. Less than a week after the training, participants already reported having used the materials with positive results!

A series of **Healthy and Homemade** programs were held at the Extension office this spring. The three-session series included **Cooking for One or Two**, which taught individuals how to stretch their food dollar while creating tasty, nutritious meals and how to make the most out of cooking for a smaller-sized household. Session two, **Slow Cooker Meals**, identified foods that were appropriate to cook in a slow cooker, helped recognize benefits and features of a slow cooker, identified food safety and safe cleaning procedures, and defined ways to adjust recipes for slow cookers. The third and final session was **Freezer Meals**. Busy families with after-school activities or other commitments learned strategies on feeding their family nutritious, home-cooked meals to help reduce stress at meal time.

Food and Environment

Wright County Extension hosted a brand new program this fall known as **Women Managing Horses**. Participants from three different states joined in to learn new skills for their horse businesses and/or for their own horses. Topics covered included managing finances, equine

insurance, designing health care programs, marketing, evaluating rations, and facilities/environment best practices. Participants commented that the information received was useful and eye opening, pushing them to think harder about their own personal situations, whether it be marketing a horse or optimizing their business production.

A **Backyard Chickens** program was held in Clarion in November. The program went deep into various aspects of owning chickens such as breeds, nutrition, housing, selling of eggs/meat, and understanding local town laws about chicken ownership. Participants ranged from those who did not have chickens, 4-Hers, and seasoned producers. Participants gained new knowledge and shared their experiences while networking with other producers.

A series of horticulture programs took place in the spring in Wright County. First was **Attracting Birds, Bees and Butterflies to the Garden**. Participants learned how they could attract pollinators to their garden landscape and what plants to grow to support our native pollinators. Second was **Gardening 101**, where participants learned basic tips on how to improve their gardens, how to get started, and which landscape plantings would be right for them.

K-12 Youth Outreach

Wright County hosted two 4th-8th grade and four K-3rd grade **day camps** over the course of the summer, attended by 89 youth. Twenty-five of the youth were new to the Wright County 4-H program. Youth learned about celebrations around the world, space, birds, bugs, bees, robots, and rockets. The day camps were planned and executed by two summer 4-H day camp educators and the Wright County summer intern.

The Dows Library hosted Jessica Norman, Wright County youth coordinator, at its **afterschool program**. At the program, nine young people and two adults engaged with Bee-Bots robots. The robots were used to spell youth names, determine the right answer to a math problem, and figure out an answer to a mystery. Clover Kids worked as a team to code their answers with their Bee-Bots robots.

Wright County's **Intermediate Council** grew from seven to 15 youth for the 2018-19 year. The team, made up of seventh and eighth graders, leads events such as special interest workshops and day camps throughout the year. The group expects to grow during the 4-H year. There are 38 intermediate 4-H members in Wright County.

Youth in Wright County were engaged in a wide breadth of **workshops** during the 2018-19 program year. These workshops included food and nutrition, sewing, visual arts, rabbits, photography, and goats. Community members were responsible for planning and leading the young people through each workshop. Wright County staff engaged youth throughout the program year with additional opportunities and workshops.

Gabby Hackley, a senior Wright County 4-H member, engaged 50 youth in Wright County with programming focused on **Native Bees**.

The **Ag Innovators Experience** is an ongoing grant from the National 4-H Council and is led by senior 4-H members and staff. Fifty young people in Wright County were engaged for at least six hours with programming at Clarion-Goldfield-Dows third grade and a day camp for K-3rd grades. Hardin, Hamilton, Humboldt, Webster, and Wright Counties worked together in the summer season to provide opportunities for all youth in the area.

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