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 Dallas County for a #STRONGIOWA.

Dallas 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
- Food and the Environment
- Health and Well-being
- K12 Youth Outreach

Dallas County Celebrates 100 Years of Service

Dallas County was the last of Iowa’s 99 counties to celebrate 100 years of service. During the 2019 Adel Sweet Corn Festival, we were presented plaques from four Chambers of Commerce; Adel, Grimes, Perry and Waukee (Photo Left). To celebrate, Dallas County Extension had booths from our four program areas with giveaways including 4-H clover tattoos (Photo Right), activities, and plenty of information to share with the community.

To view highlights of our 100 year celebration visit https://bit.ly/2FuMHCQ

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.

Brent Schwenneker
Extension Council Chair

Jerry Chizek
Regional Director

Tony Collins
Council Member

Matthew Ellerman
Council Member

Doug Pfeiffer
Council Member

Bret Griffin
Council Member

Julie Russell
Council Member

Beth Griffin
Council Member

Nicki Stajcar
Council Member

Lorinda Inman
Council Member

Joshua Williams
Council Member
Employee Spotlight:
Maddie Mardesen

Maddie grew up on a farm near Elliott, Iowa. Maddie has a Bachelor’s Degree in English and Theater from Morningside College and earned her Master’s Degree in Experiential Education from Minnesota State University (MSU) in Mankato. Her experiences include working as a MSU graduate assistant with Educator Partnerships and as a Program Coordinator at the Science Center of Iowa. Maddie is trained in Mental Health First Aid for both youth and adults.

As a Human Sciences Educator, Maddie’s areas of focus are health and nutrition, finance, family life, and youth programs.

Get In Contact:
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Health and Well-Being
Impacted: 1,121 people

Dallas County Extension knows that to build a strong community you need to focus on building a healthy family. We strive to meet this goal through programs designed to engage participants of all ages.

For the third year, Dallas County implemented the Abriendo Caminos program in Perry for Latino families. The goal of the program was to prove how engaging in workshops and conversations about health increases the overall good health of the participants.

Rated as the #1 drug prevention program by the World Health Organization, Strengthening Families 10-14 program was facilitated by Dallas County Human Sciences Extension staff. Families learned to build on their strengths, use new skills, and improve their relationships to decrease family conflict and risky adolescent behaviors.

Dallas County Extension provided a literacy program in the spring for preschoolers and their parents/caregivers, entitled Raising School Ready Readers. Exposure to early literacy development on a daily basis provides children with the skills needed for school readiness and early elementary success. Of the surveyed participants 100% indicated that the strategies learned in the program helped better equip them to build on their child’s literacy skills.

We had 88 youth participate in our Teen Babysitting program where they learned how to safely care for younger children in their care.

Pesticide Trainings

Two hundred and sixty adults received continuing education on current rules and regulations for applying pesticides. These are the people who take care of your parks, cities and may even come to your homes to help control issues with pests. Some of the participants are involved in Dallas County farming operations. All learned the proper ways to apply and handle insecticides while protecting the environment.

(PHoto Right) The Thistle caterpillar is the larval form of the Painted Lady Butterfly which caused problems in soybean fields this year.
Master Gardeners

There are 90 active Master Gardeners in Dallas County. This year, 19 new people attended the 40-hour class and will become certified as Master Gardeners after completing 40 volunteer hours. Dallas County Master Gardeners volunteered 2,500 hours reaching many communities. They offered workshops, helped with school gardens, planted and maintained the demonstration garden at the Dallas County Fairgrounds, and helped to bring the flower beds around the Dallas County Courthouse back to life. They also worked in the Fruitful Vine Garden, where they harvested 3,000 pounds of produce which was given to the food pantry in Waukee.

Master Conservation Program

Dallas County was one of nine counties that offered the Master Conservationist program in the spring of 2019. We partnered with Dallas County Conservation, Dallas County Soil and Water District, and Brenton Arboretum to “Plant the Seeds of Conservation.” Fourteen Dallas County residents became passionate stewards who will be engaged in local communities advocating for conservation practices that will ensure a sustainable future for Iowa’s landscape. We explored different locations in Dallas County each week, providing hands-on activities as we studied the environment, wildlife, woodlands, prairies, wetlands, sustainable agriculture, and urban conservation.

“Having recently become a landowner, I could not have found a more helpful way to learn where and who to connect with on properly taking care of my property, setting up a safe haven for wildlife, and learning more about what programs exist for help and guidance here in Iowa. We learned about things we could do ourselves, visited different locations where conservation initiatives were underway, spoke with different groups leading conservation efforts in Central Iowa, and learned where else we could connect if we had other questions. From soil health to rainwater management to native plantings to agricultural practices - I only wish the program was longer because I had such a great time and cannot believe how much I learned in just a six-week window!”

Missy Fiesler, 2019
Master Conservationist participant
K-12 Youth Outreach

ISU Extension and Outreach offered programming to K-12 youth to help them reach their full potential. This year we reached over 1,000 youth with the help of 74 adult volunteers who shared their skills and knowledge. We have many traditional 4-H clubs, Clover Kids, as well as specialized clubs for Robotics and Shooting Sports. We also offered opportunities to participate in camping, workshops, trips, and the county and state fairs. Three youth were awarded scholarship money at the state fair for their outstanding projects. Many of the 4-H clubs learn about citizenship through activities such as volunteering at Ronald McDonald House, helping at A-Heinz rescue, adopting families at Christmas, visiting with residents in a care facility, and sprucing up school playgrounds and parks.

Early Childhood

Through grants provided by Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) and the United Way of Central Iowa we provide opportunities to all age groups. Our work through the grants reached out to preschools, child development homes, and child care centers throughout Dallas, Adair, Madison, and Warren counties.

Early Childhood Programming Facts

- 39 child care training activities provided.
- 474 child care providers participated in professional development.
- 59 early learning programs participated in quality improvement.
- 138 children received preschool tuition assistance.
- 329 children received dental screenings.
- 5 children received preschool transportation assistance.
- 9 high risk families were connected with family support services.

County Extension Staff

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Angela Ayala
Clover Kids Coordinator

Megan Will
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