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
- Health and Well-Being
- Food and the Environment
- K-12 Youth Outreach

**County Extension Staff**
- Karen Byers  
  County Extension Director
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**Economic Development**

Dickinson County Extension responded to a request to provide training on the impacts of low income in our communities.

Grant funding from the Dickinson County Endowment Fund provided financial assistance to support two Poverty Simulation trainings. With the help of 70 volunteers, the first simulation was conducted with 60 community leaders and a second with 125 Okoboji School District administrators, faculty and staff.

Participants in each simulation were assigned to family groups and given instructions to provide for their family’s basic needs for one month on a low income. They were given play money and a few assets to get started. Volunteers served in the roles of landlords, bankers, pawn brokers, welfare workers, etc. The four weeks were simulated by four, 15-minute rounds. At the end of the month, families evaluated whether or not their decisions were successful.

"The simulation showed me the reality of the decisions people in poverty have to make and the roadblocks they have. I see how blessed we are and how a child's home life effects student learning," shared a teacher.

Overturned chairs simulated that the family had been evicted from their home.

"Many people don’t think poverty is an ‘issue’ in Dickinson County but it is a serious concern just as it is in many other parts of the country,” stated Okoboji Superintendent, Gary Janssen. “Based on Federal Income Guidelines, 38% of Okoboji students qualify for free or reduced lunches.”

Not only youth live in poverty, but also their families. Helping community leaders and educators develop awareness and sensitivity to this reality is important to the health and well-being of our communities.
Health and Well-Being
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Iowa has the highest percentage of employed parents of young children in the nation. Finding quality childcare is often a concern.

Dickinson County Extension delivered a series of “Better Kid Care” classes throughout the year to give childcare providers a variety of professional development opportunities to improve their level of care and education for young children.

Topics ranged from healthy eating, to dealing with behavior problems, building relationships, and exploring nature.

Approximately, 100 local childcare providers took part in these trainings to earn CEU’s (continuing education units) and improve the health and well-being of children in Dickinson County.

Food and Environment
Local food systems are a priority for ISU Extension and Outreach. They offer new options for Iowa farmers and consumers by:

• strengthening local economies
• creating beginning farmer options
• broadening established farmer opportunities
• revitalizing communities
• reconnecting farmers & consumers
• promoting healthy eating habits, and
• producing food in a sustainable way.

Regional Extension Director, Cheryl Heronemus, said “having ISU student interns in the far corner of the state has strengthened the connection between Extension & Outreach and the colleges.”

ISU Extension & Outreach and the Colleges of Design and Human Sciences have committed to a three year agreement to continue the local foods summer internships. Plans are underway to recruit student interns for the 2015 Rising Star Program.

K-12 Youth Outreach
Positive youth development continues to be a priority for Dickinson County Extension as evidenced by having the second largest 4-H enrollment in the State.

Whether serving youth in one of our 11 community clubs, 6 school leadership enrichment programs, or nearly 50 STEM-based camps and workshops this past year, our goal has been to empower youth to reach their full potential through youth-adult partnerships and research-based experiences.

We plan to sustain learning experiences that connect with Iowa State University’s knowledge and research base to develop youth as:

• Productive Citizens
• Outstanding Communicators
• Effective leaders
• Successful Learners

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