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Dickinson 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. Dickinson County Council Members include: Sue Boettcher, Steve Brueggeman, Ernest Cupp, Connie Purchase, Susan Reiser, Curt Smith, VerDon Schmidt and Cari Wallace.

We have identified these local issues as priority topics for current and future programming:  
• Healthier Lifestyle Choices  
• Family Financial Security  
• Growth of Youth & 4-H Programs  
• Reach with Underserved Audiences

Meeting Local Needs 2012

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ISU Extension and Outreach supports healthy people, environments, and economies by providing educational opportunities. We meet local needs; improve quality of life; and help make Dickinson County a better place to live.

Steve Brueggeman  
Extension Council Chair  
Cheryl Heronemus  
Regional Extension Director

STEM Initiatives Flourish!  
Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) oh my! That was exactly our reaction when 22 middle school-age youth emerged for the Geospatial and Robotics Technology for the 21st Century Camp (GEAR-Tech-21 Camp) this summer.

The week-long camp trained youth in robotics, global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS). Interest in the STEM initiatives has continued to flourish in Dickinson County with five FIRST® LEGO® League Robotics clubs meeting this year.

FIRST® LEGO® League Robotics is one of 12 hands-on programs selected by the Governor’s STEM Advisory Council to be distributed via six regional hubs, assuring access to all Iowa students. Youth Specialist and STEM Advisory member, Wade Weber stated, “ISU Extension and Outreach is uniquely positioned to substantiate this initiative in our local communities. There is real momentum now that we have businesses, educators, parents and the community all working towards preparing our kids for their futures.”

Dickinson County robotics activities caught the eye of Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and UNI President Ben Allen at a local town hall meeting.

“Kids like Amelia are the ideal target for a new government initiative to get young people interested in STEM education,” says Reynolds. “Education in these fields has fallen on the back burner, and that’s causing a huge talent gap across Iowa and the country.”

‘Rapid student impact’ is the focus of the Governor’s STEM Advisory Council. The six Iowa regional hubs are positioned to promote STEM education and economic development across the state through a public-private partnership. The overarching goals are to create greater student achievement in science, technology, engineering, and math subjects and a stronger STEM workforce.
Healthy People
Increases in food costs, food allergies and childhood obesity were three key indicators for Dickinson County Extension to provide high-quality, accessible, research-based training for local child care providers.

Throughout the year, Extension partnered with ISU Nutrition & Health Specialist Holly Van Heel to deliver childcare provider nutrition trainings to more than 50 local professionals. Participants gained two continuing educational units (CEUs) for each session and learned ways to:

- **Spend Smart. Eat Smart.** By… saving on food expenses while incorporating new ideas into menu planning and food shopping.

- **Manage Food Allergies.** By… identifying the 8 most common food allergens and substituting foods nutritionally equivalent.

- **Color Me Healthy.** By… setting goals for increasing the color variety of fruits and vegetables served.

- **Provide Healthy Foods & Physical Activity.** By… developing a plan to introduce new foods, add more physical activity and encourage children to self-regulate eating and activities.

Childcare professionals remarked, “We are thankful to have continuing educational opportunities offered so close to home without having to drive across the state and to have training offered at times so that we don’t have to close our childcare center.”

Healthy Economies
With an increasing number of residents expressing financial concerns, Dickinson County Extension found a way to help. Just as a sports coach improves a player’s athletic abilities, a financial coach can improve the financial stability of families.

Extension called on Jan Burk, Iowa State University Extension Family Finance Specialist, to deliver a five-part “Financial Coaches Training” series for individuals and non-profit groups that coach clients on financial matters.

“Financial coaches aren’t financial professionals. They don’t recommend investment strategies or set up estate plans,” says Burk. “Instead, they utilize the unbiased, research-based information from ISU to serve as motivators and mentors for individuals who need help communicating about money, tracking spending, maintaining a spending plan, saving toward a goal, understanding credit, and identifying community resources.”

Healthy Environments
The Dickinson County 4-H and Youth Council Members demonstrated their environmental civic-mindedness this past spring through a program called “Operation ReLeaf” Tree Project.

4-H Youth partnered with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Alliant Energy and the Spirit Lake Fire Department to sell and distribute more than 200 high-quality, low-cost shade trees throughout the county.

Studies show that the presence of shade trees in yards adds 3-15% to home values. Additionally, shoppers claim they will spend 9-12% more for goods and services in communities having a high quality tree canopy. They will travel further and spend more time in these communities.

4-H youth initiatives helped improve environmental conditions in the county, helped to boost the economic traffic, and successfully fundraised for county-wide 4-H programming with their peers.