Serving the People of Dubuque County

As Iowans adjusted to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, ISU Extension and Outreach continued to prioritize health and safety as we delivered research-based education to the people of Dubuque County. During 2021, we focused on the following efforts:

- **Master Gardeners**—2021 featured the highest attended training of 22 participants with a hybrid of virtual and in-person instruction.

- A free seed program offered in partnership with the Dubuque County Library offered free seeds for green beans with season-long tips on growing and caring for a crop of green beans.

The County Extension Council has been elected by the people of the county to guide local educational programming by partnering with extension staff. From needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of outcomes, the council represents you and your issues. We are always serving Iowans and we are here for you. Now. Always.

Thank you for your support.

**Ron Calonder**
Extension Council Chair

**Mary Lou Baal**
Council Member

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**Jennifer Vaske**
Council Member

**William Watters**
Council Member
Wine Wednesday, Brittany Demezier, Spotlight:

Dubuque County is home to seven different wineries and several vineyards. This unique component of Dubuque agriculture was highlighted during the virtual and in person Wine Wednesday program. For six weeks last spring, Dr. Aude Watrelot joined in a virtual series on grapes and wine. In advance of the online session, participants would order the weekly wine from an area winemaker. Each week participants explored a new type of Iowa wine and the grapes used to make it. As a group, participants were guided through the winemaking process from planting the grape vines to wine production and sensory evaluation. This workshop was offered again in the fall as a 3-hour in-person experience.

Participants from both workshops noted a marked increase in their knowledge of Iowa wines and interest in purchasing local wines from area wineries.

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Harvest of the Month box program explores seasonal foods

Due to the popularity of the Harvest of the Month preschool program, and an increase in the number of meals prepared at home due to COVID-19, a new iteration of Harvest of the Month was introduced in 2021. Harvest of the Month Family Harvest Boxes allows recipients to choose a seasonal harvest item and explores how it is grown, how to prepare it, as well as identifies the different types that may be found in the store or farmers market. Due to reduced capacity for in-person programming, these harvest boxes are a great way for people to connect with their food and their community while building skills to make healthy food choices. Boxes included multiple varieties of the selected harvest item, simple, family-friendly recipes so participants can try the items at home, and a link to a live training session to learn more about the items in the box.

Literacy Integration in the Classroom

This past year Dubuque County 4-H staff collaborated to create and execute a plan that would meet the needs of ISU Extension and Outreach’s COVID recovery initiative on expanding educational opportunities for youth. Leah Imoeih, K-12 Outreach Coordinator and Katie Peterson, Youth Program Specialist achieved success through a local partnership. They partnered with the Dubuque Community School District, DCSD, to provide educational programs in their elementary buildings. Imoeih and Peterson worked to align research-based curriculum with the current science standards and also provided DCSD opportunities to integrate math and literacy. The programs delivered in the classrooms included hands-on activities in STEM and healthy living, read-a-louds, and StoryWalk® experiences. A StoryWalk® program is designed for families to engage in STEM and healthy living literacy activities while learning, moving and enjoying the outdoors.

Dubuque County 4-H’s goal was to offer youth a positive learning experience in addition to supporting the Iowa Core in areas of science, math, literacy and 21st century skills. Program participants noted improved knowledge of STEM topics. As a result from this partnership, Dubuque County 4-H continues to partner with DCSD to provide research based programs within the elementary classrooms that enrich the students’ learning opportunities in Dubuque. Along with making Iowa Core connections, these efforts support the
goals of Every Child Reads initiative in Dubuque County of which Peterson is a member. Every Child Reads is a collaborative effort by funders, nonprofit partners, schools, and parents to help ensure that all children succeed in school and are prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship.

Lessons include:
- Terrific Trees,
- WaterRocks,
- Storywalk for Lincoln Elementary,
- Space Storywalk for DBQ Schools and Native Bees - 2nd Grade

the hands-on/visual demonstrations in each week of the course stating “Loved learning about the sustainable farming practices” and “Helpful to have hands on experience”.

Master Conservation Program Launched in Dubuque County

2021 was the first year Master Conservation was hosted in Dubuque County with 25 participants. In this seven-week course, participants learned about what makes the resources on Dubuque County landscape unique and what is being done to preserve those resources. ISU Extension and Outreach Dubuque County partnered with several community organizations, including Iowa DNR, Mines of Spain, Izaak Walton League of America, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Office of Dubuque County, National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, New Melleray Abbey, and other local farmers. Participants really liked the hands-on/visual demonstrations in each week of the course stating “Loved learning about the sustainable farming practices” and “Helpful to have hands on experience”.

Working toward Recovery

As our state works toward recovery, ISU Extension and Outreach Dubuque County has been offering resources to those who need assistance in accessing food and those who want to learn more about where their food comes from. Additionally, Dubuque County wants to support those dealing with social isolation and stress brought on by the pandemic.

As a result, ISU Extension and Outreach Dubuque County decided in 2021 to focus on two initiatives:

- engaging Iowans in improving food supply, safety, and access.
- engaging Iowans in addressing mental health.

Specific efforts included Farm to School, garden education, Harvest of the Month, Horticulture at Home, Brain Break kits to all 4-H members, Water Rocks and Outdoor Adventures.

Looking ahead to 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Dubuque County will offer:

- Preserving the Taste of Summer to teach canning
- Let’s Plant a Garden
- Free Seed Potato Program
- Youth Mental Health First Aid Training
- Mindful Teens
- Powerful Tools for Caregivers
The programs previously listed, respond to helping Iowans, improve their mental and physical health to build a #STRONGIOWA.

Growing Up Wild Offers Nature Education to Pre-K Teachers in Dubuque

In February 2021, a total of 31 participants (29 Community Pre-K teachers and 2 Early Childhood Education facilitators) in Dubuque participated in the pilot virtual Growing Up Wild program.

This collaboration provided educational training for all Pre-K teachers in Dubuque as part of a larger collaboration that focuses on incorporating more nature into education in pre-K through 5th grade in the Dubuque Community School District.

Growing Up Wild was funded by a grant from the Dubuque Community School District and was a collaboration between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach-Human Sciences Specialists, Dubuque Community School District, Iowa DNR, and Dubuque County Conservation. All 50 teachers/consultants received the Growing Up Wild resource book.

Growing Up Wild builds on the children’s sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them through a range of activities and experiences.

Human Sciences Specialists Barb Dunn Swanson, Danielle Day, Cindy Thompson (Tech assistance) along with Barb Gigar and Holly Schulte from Iowa DNR, and Kaytlan Moeller, Naturalist with Dubuque County Conservation provided a 150 hour virtual training via Zoom.

In the virtual training, participants gained an understanding of the research behind why getting outdoors and being in nature is important at an early age. Participants learned how to adapt activities for both indoor and outdoor use, how to incorporate nature into what they are already doing in their classrooms, and learned about additional resources available to them.