

# BUILDING A #STRONGIOWA

ISU Extension and Outreach connects the needs of Iowans with Iowa State University research and resources. We are working with the people of Linn County for what we all want: a strong Iowa.

## Linn 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 example
- Food and the Environment example
- Health and Well-being example
- K12 Youth Outreach Example

## Economic Development

Helping young people to explore possible careers is key to improving economic capacity. Community Outreach Gardens in Linn County stretch from Wellington Heights to Hiawatha to Nixon School. At the Olivet/Horizons garden “meet and greets” have taken place with students to teach them about gardening.



The Marion Community Garden headed by Phil Pfister, Linn County Master Gardener, has donated lettuce, spinach, radishes, tomatoes, peppers, beans and squash to the



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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.

Vicki Keegan  
*Extension Council Chair*

Jim Harken  
*Linn County Extension Regional Director*

RaeAnn Barnhart  
*Linn County Extension Director*

Churches of Marion Food Pantry. Volunteers from Veridian Credit Union took on two of the beds as a community project. At the Nixon Elementary garden volunteers met with the 6th grade classes to discuss a potting mix for transplanting seedlings versus regular garden soil, and then moved to a hands on “make a container, and plant it” activity. Students made square pots from newspapers and planted either sunflower, marigold, squash or cucumber seeds. Hiawatha Care Center has been approved as the next COG partner.

## Health and Well Being

How can families with low resources use their limited food dollars to get the best nutrition? **Buy. Eat. Live Healthy** is a program that allows trained nutrition educators to bring practical, hands-on experiences in choosing and preparing meals to individuals and groups. Through a series of eight lessons, participants are given tools to help them make behavior changes.

In the 2016 program year, BELH nutrition educators served 208 families and graduated 109 families. The percentage of



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those who graduated in 2016 (52.4%) increased almost 10% from 2015. (42.8%). One refugee family that the educators served this year, learned to adapt to new food, how to purchase food, and how to freeze more of the food instead of throwing it away. This family reported a reduction of \$15 in one month in the amount they spent on food.

### Food safety education in Linn County

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimates 1 in 6 Americans (48 million) experience foodborne illness each year, with 3,000 resulting in death. About half of every dollar spent on food in America is spent on food prepared away from home (Agricultural Research Service, USDA). These statistics underscore the importance of safe food handling within food establishments.

Iowa lawmakers took action on the food safety issue in 2014 with new guidelines, requiring food establishments to designate a Certified Food Protection Manager to oversee the safe food handling, preparation, and service of food items. To meet the demand for Certified Food Protection Manager certification, Linn County Extension has been offering the ServSafe food protection manager course. From January - October 2016, 88 food handlers had taken this course through Linn County Extension, with 68% passing the exam.

### Food and Environment

Palmer amaranth is an aggressive broadleaf annual weed, it is native to the southwest US and has made its way north and east. It has also been identified in 50 Iowa counties. In southern states, this weed competes with crops (soybean, corn, and cotton) and has caused complete crop losses in some areas due to its competitive growth and ability to develop herbicide resistance. If identified early, we may have the ability to eradicate this weed prior to it becoming a serious threat. A meeting was held this fall in Central City, IA, to inform Linn County residents of this weed. There were a total of 17 attendees and out of those 17, two attendees identified four new Palmer amaranth infestations in Linn County;

because of the meeting these attendees were able to identify the weed and take appropriate measures to manage the issue.

### K-12 Youth Outreach

Franklin Middle School Teachers in Cedar Rapids, Amanda Boyer and John Hebrink, are both proud 4-H alumni and contacted Ann Torbert, Youth Specialist, looking for a way for their students in the newly formed KITE (Knowledge based Inquiry through Teamwork and Exploration) program at Franklin to have 4-H experiences in the classroom. From August-October, Youth Specialists from extension along with an extension agriculture engineer worked with community partners in Cedar Rapids to organize and conduct the 2016 National Youth Science Day. ISU Specialists worked to share a drone experiment with the group of 53 students. The same evening, the fifty-three students shared what they learned with their parents and members of the community. Youth learned the basics of flight, coding, different types of drones, and had the chance to fly simulators.

A second event was conducted at the US Cellular Customer Care Center and was attended by 8 youth and parents. Activities were led by volunteer Anne Jahnke, a mechanical engineer, Andrew Bowen, Youth Council member, and US Cellular Employees. Youth learned that drones were used in farming, and enjoyed flying the foam gliders. Youth made foam gliders that could collect video, and learned the basics of flight and coding. Both drone events were funded through a partnership with US Cellular and National 4-H Council.



### County Extension Staff—Housed in Linn

Morgan Boniface - PEC Director	Johanna Rahbusch - Bookkeeper
Kristi Cooper - Human Sciences Specialist, Family Life	Janice Savel - Office Assistant
Mary Dlouhy - 4-H Assistant	Taylor Sickles - Food Corp Service Member
Melissa Dryzcimski - PEC Assistant	Donna Smith - Buy. Eat. Live Healthy Program Assistant
Bailey Hanson - Eco Specialist	Nathan Spalding - Food Corp Service Member
Kate Moore - County Youth Coordinator	Ann Torbert - 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Shelly O'Neal - Master Gardener Program Coordinator/ Community Ag Program Liaison	Paula Wood - Buy. Eat. Live Healthy Program Assist

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