2020 IN MAHASKA COUNTY

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 Mahaska County for a #STRONGIOWA:

🌱 Sustainable ENVIRONMENTS 🌱 Thriving COMMUNITIES 🌱 Resilient PEOPLE 🌱 Future LEADERS

The Mahaska 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.

Joy Prothero Extension Council Chair
Andy Padgett Council Member

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Stacey Scott Council Member

Phil Hol Council Member
Mike Sytsma Council Member

Amanda Lusk Council Member
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Serving the People of Mahaska County

ISU Extension and Outreach Mahaska County began 2020 focused on the following efforts:

- Master Gardeners hosted nine (of 14 planned) events open to the public in early 2020. These events provide education to the public as well as serve as continuing education for existing Master Gardeners and recruiting events for potential Master Gardeners.

- ServSafe is an eight hour food safety training for foodservice managers and workers. The course was offered three times in Mahaska County (January, July, and October) with a total of
**Maker Lab**

The 4-H Maker Lab was created for creativity. After receiving two STEM Scale Up—Making STEM Connections kits over the past five years and raising funds to purchase additional robots for our WonderLeague program and Maker Club, we needed a place to store everything. The dream of creating a 4-H Maker Lab was born and County Youth Coordinator, Amy Brainard, spent several months organizing and assembling kits, lessons, curriculum, and creating a space for all ages to enjoy.

The 4-H Maker Lab was officially opened on October 5 during National 4-H Week with a ribbon cutting provided by the Mahaska Chamber Diplomats.

Youth participating in Maker Monday workshops and Maker Club meetings have enjoyed being able to learn about new technology through hands-on activities. A few favorites in the lab include the Sketch 3D printers, Dash & Cue robots, and the ever-popular Cubelets.

**Get In Contact:**

Amy Brainard,  
County Youth Coordinator  
Mahaska County

21 participants attending in 2020. During the course, participants learn current best practices related to safe food handling, cleaning and sanitizing as well as tips on how to implement essential food safety practices and create a culture of food safety. The trainings were delivered by Human Sciences Nutrition and Wellness Specialist, Sara Sprouse.

- Continuing Instructional Courses for Commercial Pesticide, Private Pesticide Confinement Manure, and Commercial Manure were held.
- 4-H added the Maker Club which is a special-interest 4-H club focusing on the maker movement through hands-on activities related to STEM, healthy living, communication, and teamwork. The Maker Club met weekly for one month and finished their meetings with a fun field trip to William Penn University in the Musco Technology Center’s Industrial Technology workshop. Participants were able to make their own peg games and learned how to use routers, sanders, laser engravers, and injection molders. This wonderful partnership plans to continue in the future.
- Clover Kids Healthy Living special-interest group was formed and meetings were held in January and February. The members enjoyed meeting weekly to learn about healthy snack options, simple exercises, and being mindful about food choices.

**Adjusting to the Pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic changed daily life, ISU Extension and Outreach prioritized health and safety as we developed new ways to bring research-based education to the people of Mahaska County. We remained open for business and we continued to educate, engage, and serve Iowans.

- Extension staff began working from home on March 16 and reopened our doors to the public on June 3.
- Upon reopening, the following protocols are in place:
  - Reviewed and implemented The Decision Tree from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
  - Stop signs are posted, reminding visitors that if they have experienced a cough or fever in the last 24 hours, do not enter.
  - Keeping a log of who visits the office or attends a meeting in case contact tracing is required. There is a notepad on the front
desk area for staff to record this information. Whoever greets the clients in the reception area is responsible for logging this information.

- Disinfecting between clients is done at the staff discretion.
- A table has been placed in front of the main desk area to keep visitors away from counter.
- Handwashing and/or sanitizing is done when entering back into the office.
- Those wanting to visit the office, have been requested to call the office first to keep visitors to a minimum.
- The black box on the outside of the building will be used as the drop box.
- Cleaning supplies are provided and staff reimbursed if they bring their own supplies and turn in receipts.
- All staff have the responsibility to self-monitor and stay home when ill or show symptoms of illness taking sick leave.
- All staff have their temperature taken when entering the building.
- Social distancing is observed.
- Hand washing is required.
- Cough and sneeze etiquette are always to be observed.
- Sanitizing is done throughout the day particularly in high traffic areas.
- Understand who is at high risk

- Clover Kids in-person programming was put on hold in March 2020. To continue engaging our Kindergarten-3rd grade participants, we offered several virtual “Listen and Draw” sessions, reading visually descriptive books from the Iowa Clover Kids STEM Lit to-go kits over Zoom calls, encouraging the Clover Kids to image and draw what they were hearing from the book. Clover Kids enjoyed sharing their drawings with peers!

- To provide our 4-H Beef Exhibitors with additional information after the in-person Beef Showmanship Clinic was cancelled, 4-H staff, superintendents and other volunteers were able to create two beef showmanship demonstration videos in May. The videos highlighted Mahaska County 4-H members and their beef cattle in the Pavilion at the Southern Iowa Fairgrounds, demonstrating ring logistics as well as show ring etiquette. This excellent resource had over 200 views on our 4-H YouTube channel and we’re excited to have these videos as tools for families to reference in the future.

- Horticulture inquiries have continued to be answered by Mahaska County Horticulturist, Suzette Striegel. Clients have been encouraged to use phone and email; with many clients using the drop box/area for leaving samples without contact. Numerous Facebook posts and news releases were completed to share the horticulture resources available.

- Master Gardener monthly business meetings have been held since June by hybrid (Zoom and & limited in-person) and Zoom.

- Master Gardeners provided a tree identification station at Mahaska County Conservation’s Youth Outdoor Field Day. Master Gardeners at the booth wore face masks, sanitized items and socially distanced within the station’s tables and tree samples.

- Region 18 Master Gardeners met for a socially distanced tree walk.

- Beginning in September, Master Gardeners hosted three events open to the public by zoom for continuing education and recruitment.

- Online Food Preservation 101 – the pandemic has renewed interest in gardening and food preservation. Gardening can improve food security, decrease the number of trips to the grocery store and provide a source of fresh, quality produce. This free online program was offered at a variety of times, May through September, with at least 289 in attendance, locally and nationwide. More online food preservation classes are being offered this fall and winter.

- Online child care provider trainings – During the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers have faced many challenges. To increase access to quality childcare, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is conducting online trainings for child care providers. Each training is offered multiple times, and is taught by ISU Extension and Outreach human sciences specialists.
• Ag Help & Field Calls - While individual field calls are still being conducted in person (with social distancing, etc.) and phone and e-mail conversations still occur, much of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach crops programming has shifted to on-line offerings due to COVID-19. **Crops TV** is a new program that is aimed at delivering research-based crop production information directly to farmers and agribusinesses in their own locations, and at times that are convenient for them. To learn more: CropsTV: [http://www.aep.iastate.edu/cropstv/](http://www.aep.iastate.edu/cropstv/).

**Providing a County Fair Experience**

Although the traditional fair was not possible because of the pandemic, ISU Extension and Outreach Mahaska County worked with our partners to provide an alternate experience to demonstrate and showcase the work of our 4-H youth. The following was implemented during the 2020 Southern Iowa Fair in Oskaloosa:

- Non-conference static exhibit judging
- Physically distant waiting areas
- Increased sanitization procedures, including hand sanitizer stations at the entry of every building and barn
- Face coverings encouraged
- 4-H Office Shed to provide limited contact service
- "Our family is so, so thankful for the perseverance, countless planning efforts, details, and communication of our 4H/Iowa State staff, and Southern Iowa Fair (SIF) board, in successfully navigating our 2020 SIF for a fun, family event so much appreciated in this year of COVID. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts." – Wielard Family

• 2020 was the first year for using FairEntry with our 4-H families. Due to the pandemic, our in-person workshops explaining how to use FairEntry were cancelled. Instead, we put together tutorial videos and posted them as a useful tool on our 4-H YouTube channel.

• Master Gardeners are members of the county fair’s open class committee. The exhibitors and committee wore face masks and socially distanced during the entry, judging and release periods.

**Planning for Recovery**

ISU Extension and Outreach Mahaska County is determined to help Iowans help each other. Looking ahead to 2021, we will support Iowans in reviving the Iowa economy, including the farm economy. ISU Extension and Outreach believes in the power of entrepreneurs and the value they bring to our communities. We support small businesses through research-based training and technical assistance. We provide agribusinesses and farmers with research-based education to inform their decisions. We are committed to helping Iowa’s rural communities, agribusinesses, and farmers remain financially solvent, connect to appropriate resources, find alternate markets, and increase their profitability.

In the coming months, Mahaska County Extension and Outreach will partner with businesses, CED organizations and communities across the county and region to develop and work toward identified common goals for economic recovery.

Extension will provide educational and facilitation resources to help families and communities thrive while achieving positive economic outcomes.

**Extension Staff**

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**ISU Extension and Outreach**

**Mahaska County**

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