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

**Mills 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:

- Thriving Communities
- Sustainable and Safe Food System
- Advancing Agriculture
- K12 Youth Outreach; 4-H, STEAM

**Thriving Communities**

Mills County Extension believes in partnering with individuals and organizations to grow our communities. The Mills County Leadership Academy was initiated from a partnership between Glenwood Area Chamber of Commerce, Mills County Extension, businesses and individuals interested in planning for a successful future for Mills County. This program engages community members who desire to strengthen their leadership skills and connection to their community. The first class, “The Pioneers”, graduated in 2018. Graduates stated they gained confidence in their abilities to lead, made beneficial connections, learned about their greater community, and would be willing to commit to stepping into leadership positions that are essential for thriving communities.

**Extension Council Members**

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.

Nancy McGrew  
Council Chair

Dawn Hillyer  
Council Vice Chair

Barb Mass  
Council Treasurer

Nicole Walters  
Council Secretary

Tina Bakehouse  
Council Member

Scott McMullen  
Council Member

Alex Schultz  
Council Member

Jamie Thompson  
Council Member

Woody Wright  
Council Member

Alan Ladd  
Regional Director
Food and Environment

The people of Mills County had many opportunities to gain knowledge to improve their environment and health through a variety of programs led by Extension.

Seventy different participants received information through seminars sponsored and organized by the Mills County Master Gardeners. Education was provided about growing mushrooms, attracting and protecting pollinators, enhancing garden soil by using no till practices, living with Japanese beetles and other pests, cooking with fresh vegetables, and being successful at Farmers Markets. Participants stated they would utilize the knowledge they gained to improve their yards and gardens.

The Master Gardeners are an important partner of Glenwood’s Giving Garden. They work side by side with the GGG Advisory Board made up of community volunteers. The average annual harvest is more than 5,000 lbs of produce, at a value of nearly $6,000. The food is donated to local food banks and senior citizens across the county. The availability of this fresh food makes it possible for families to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Extension partnered with the 5210 committee in Malvern with a goal to increase healthy eating. Extension staff planned and planted community edible gardens on Main Street. Anyone could pick the produce from the container gardens to enjoy as a snack or add to their meal. Recipes for using the herbs and vegetables were provided at the local grocery store.

K-12 Youth Outreach

East Mills elementary students are being introduced to fresh produce and increasing their movement through the Pick a Better Snack program. With the help of grant funding from Iowa Department of Public Health, Ag Educator Buddi Thompson teaches students about healthy food options while taste testing fresh produce. She incorporates exercise into the lessons to demonstrate the importance of establishing a balance of healthy eating and movement.

Only about 2% of our population lives on a farm, making it difficult for youth to understand where their food comes from. Through the Farm to School program, these students are learning about farming, and will begin growing their own produce in raised bed gardens on the school grounds in spring 2019.

Third grade students in Glenwood increase their health knowledge while participating in the Health and Nutrition Fair. Extension partners with school staff, and volunteers who guide youth through twelve health topics throughout the day. For example, students learn how much sugar is in their drinks and breakfast cereal. They learn to read food labels and problem-solve to identify better options to improve their overall nutrition. Youth also learn techniques for making sure food is prepared and stored safely to prevent food-borne illnesses. Other sessions keep students moving through dance, drama and relays.

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ADV.18.04H September 2018

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