



BUILDING A #STRONGIOWA

2019 IN MITCHELL 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 Mitchell County for a #STRONGIOWA.

Mitchell County Hosts Successful Ag Breakfast



Over 160 people attended the Mitchell County Ag Breakfast on March 21. The event recognizes contributions of agriculture and entrepreneurship in our county, promotes community education about ag in our economy, and provides participants with a networking opportunity.

Ivan Wold of Wold's Rim and Wheel spoke about innovation and selling his products worldwide. Wold emphasized the need for a strong ag economy, manufacturing, and

healthy Main Street. Challenges include available workforce and housing. He talked about the need to work together to be successful in the future.

Keynote speaker Mark A. Edelman, professor of economics and director of the Community Vitality Center (CVC) at Iowa State University, talked about the consumer-driven economy and that those consumers mainly live

on the coast. He said that entrepreneurial communities must identify problems, assemble talent and resources, and work together to move forward.

Edelman said 4-H and FFA are good starting points for entrepreneurs, and it is important to cultivate workforce and make sure capital is available if the right opportunity comes along.

Mitchell County Extension Council Members

Mitchell County Extension Council members are elected by citizens to develop local educational programming, from needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of outcomes, that meets the needs of Mitchell County residents. Mitchell County partners with specialists, campus researchers and local organizations. The Mitchell County Extension Council has identified these local issues as priority topics for current and future programming: growing local leadership in our small towns; expanding local foods with Farm to Fork; increasing health with healthy foods programs; and keeping kids safe with farm safety programs.

Kirk Phelps
Council Chair

Shawn Sponheim
Council Vice Chair

Trever Olsen
Council Treasurer

Cindy Klaes
Council Secretary

Mary Klaes
Council member

Keith Meitner
Council Member

Marlene Norby
Council Member

Denise Gerdts
Council Member

Bryan Tabbert
Council Member

Program Spotlight: VITA, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Complex and changing tax laws baffle most consumers. That confusion can be especially costly to low and moderate income taxpayers, for whom the filing of a tax return is also the process for claiming important public benefits. These benefits are received through refundable tax credits designed to reward work and assist with child-rearing costs and the costs of higher education: the Earned Income Credit, the Child Tax Credit, and the American Opportunity Credit. Typical taxpayers, feeling unequipped to prepare their own tax returns, may pay \$100-300 or more to have their return commercially prepared.

In the 2018-19 tax season, 12 volunteer tax preparers prepared 503 tax returns for low- and moderate-income households at six sites in Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Mitchell, Chickasaw, Palo Alto, and Emmet counties. The programs also assisted additional households that did not need to file or that for some other reason elected not to complete their returns. Approximately 120 of these households were eligible for the Earned Income Credit, and 160 were elderly. These two demographics tend to be indicators of need, and rarely overlap, so it is reasonable to conclude that more than half of those reached are high-need taxpayers.

Typical cost of tax preparation is \$100 and often more than \$200 for families when completed by a commercial preparer; the VITA program saved them more than \$75,450 in tax preparation fees this year conservatively estimated at \$150 per return). In addition, tax refunds claimed through Extension-supported VITA sites total over \$571,568.

This additional income provides an extremely valuable boost to families who often have little in the way of savings or emergency reserves.

Do You Know Your Conifers?



Twenty-five ladies gathered together to learn more about the different types of conifer trees from Mitchell County Extension Horticulturist Rick Pleggenkuhle. Pleggenkuhle talked about the characteristics of conifers that grow in this area and gave tips on identifying different varieties. He also shared the Iowa State University Extension forestry website with participants. Workshop participants then learned how to construct wreaths from cuttings in their yard. Ladies felt that after taking the class they not only had a great wreath, but they could now identify the trees in their yard.

4-H Junior Fun Night—Fun for All



Mitchell County 4-H'ers were joined by Worth County 4-Her's at the Cedar River Complex in Osage for the 2019 annual 4-H Junior Fun Night.

A total of 57 junior 4-H members and youth county council members participated in the annual healthy living activity. Youth enjoyed an evening of icebreakers, swimming, volleyball, basketball, racquet ball, football, and a nutritious dinner.

Youth County Council members from Mitchell County helped organize and lead the activities. We hope all the youth involved made new friends, practiced a healthy lifestyle to continue at home, and had FUN!



Celebrating Friday Night Out



Mitchell County participated in the Osage Community Friday Night Out event sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Olivia Logue, county youth coordinator,

conducted Goldfish Races, a STEM activity for youth. The hands-on experiment taught youth how the wind moves objects. Nearly 40 youth tried out the Goldfish Races and learned about the power of wind energy.

In addition to STEM activities, Iowa State University's mascot, Cy came to visit with kids. It is estimated that 250 youth attended the event.



Iowa State University Extension and Outreach participated in the first ever Osage Community School's STEAMfest!

Extension and Outreach Hosts Drone Camp

Agricultural Biosystems Engineering Specialist Kapil Arora and Mitchell County Extension staff hosted a Drone Discovery Camp for kids in grades 6-8. During the two-day camp, youth learned the theories behind drone flight and finetuned their graphing skills. Days were filled with coding, working on piloting skills through a drone simulator, and flying a real drone. Adult volunteers from our sponsor, Valent BioSciences LLC, also enjoyed testing their skills alongside youth participants.

Youth said that flying the drones were their favorite thing and that they learned math skills are very important to operating a drone. All youth plan to participate in the next drone Discovery Camp next summer to learn more and improve their piloting skills.



Extension and Outreach Participates in the First Ever STEAM Event

On March 12, ISU Extension and Outreach in Mitchell County and the Iowa State University campus FLEx, a mobile learning program for advanced design technology, participated in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math Fest at Osage Community School. Mitchell County Extension staff Darla Olson and Olivia Logue reached 120 youth. By letting students experiment, youth learned how dish soap works, surface tension of liquids, and made some awesome art creations with the Magic Milk Experiment.

The FLEx learning program gave students distinct offerings by delivering full-scale augmented and virtual visualization or interactive virtual reality experiences.

The 1st Annual STEAM Event was all part of an ongoing effort of Osage Community Schools to incorporate STEAM into their curriculum.



Mitchell County Hosts Multi-Project Workshop

On April 27, Mitchell County 4-H hosted the annual multi-project workshop hosted at CREATE in Osage by Joann Wells. Youth participating included junior members and two non-4-H'ers.

Participants chose between two projects, a multi-media wall hanging with Iowa themes or coasters. Design elements were discussed to create their unique projects. After the projects were completed, the 4-H members

worked on their goal sheets for fair. Jack Hanke, a third-year member of the Stacyville Shooting Stars 4-H Club, said, "The project looked easy at first," but later remarked, "I learned that sometimes you just have to fail to learn, well I guess not fail but try different things to learn."

4-H club and project activities are key to helping youth discover their passions and develop life skills such as problem solving and resilience.

High school 4-H county council members Sarah Phelps and Alexis Myers helped with the workshop.



Estate Planning: The Nuts and Bolts to Get You Started

Those concerned about transferring family, farm, or business assets and updating their will or trust documents, powers of attorney, and health care directives gathered in February as Melissa O'Rourke, attorney and ISU Extension and Outreach farm and business management field specialist, presented important information on transition and estate planning. Key topics included property ownership, wills, federal estate tax, Iowa inheritance tax, gifting, trusts, healthcare planning, and gifting strategies.

O'Rourke also shared how to start conversations within families about estate planning and transitioning a farm or other small

business, including building a team of professionals to assist in the process. O'Rourke explained the current status of federal estate and Iowa inheritance tax law and provided information to assist participants to work more effectively with their professional and legal advisors.

The seminar offered an opportunity for questions and got participants started on putting together a plan for lifetime transitions and estate planning.

Participants shared that it was a good start to the legal issues facing their family, but that they had a lot of work ahead and they would definitely come to another

in-depth workshop on estate planning in Mitchell County.



Leading Communities Program Builds Future Mitchell County Leaders

While there are many who are willing to give their time and talents to serve others, sometimes they lack the skills or confidence to take on leadership roles. To address it, Mitchell County, along with many community partners, sponsored a leadership development course for adults who want to make a difference in their communities.

The research-based curriculum was delivered by trained specialists in community and economic development. Participants learned about their own leadership capacity, the people, organizations, and institutions that make up their communities, and how they can engage in serving their communities more deeply. Twenty-one people participated. The final



session was in August.

Individuals who want to improve their communities by getting more involved in local nonprofit boards, government committees, and other volunteer efforts are actively improving their leadership skills during six sessions. It is hoped that the training will culminate with

an added session to develop a project of benefit to the county. Confident, skilled, and knowledgeable leaders are needed to inspire, lead, and foster dynamic and viable organizations and communities in rural Iowa, and Mitchell County is helping to meet that need by training our next

Mitchell County Offers Pesticide Safety Education Program

Mitchell County teamed up with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to provide training and certification for commercial and private pesticide applicators.

Pesticide use in Iowa is regulated under the "Pesticide Act of Iowa," Chapter 206 of the Code of Iowa. The rules governing pesticide use, application, registration, and certification are contained in Section 45 of the Iowa Administrative Code.

A private pesticide applicator is a person who applies any restricted-use pesticide for the production of an agricultural commodity on property owned or rented by the applicator or the



applicator's employer, or on the property of other agricultural producers with whom the applicator trades services.

Commercial applicator refers to a person who applies pesticides or uses pest-control devices for hire on property other than his or her own. Each of these applicators must either attend a continuing education course each year

taught by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach instructors or take a test with IDALS every 3rd year to maintain their license. In the past year, Mitchell County has provided continuing instruction for 163 private pesticide applicators and 119 commercial pesticide applicators, allowing them easy access and quality education locally.



Fabulous Fall Activities for Clover Kids



This fall, 142 kindergarten through third-grade youth have participated in the Fabulous Fall STEM-focused activities during the afterschool Clover Kids program. Youth learned how to work as a team while participating in a pumpkin relay. Clover Kids learned to use their investigative skills to discover what was inside the fall themed mystery bags.

The Clover Kids were able to pick five leaves on an outdoor adventure, and they used them to paint and stamp onto their masterpieces. They used all their senses to make inferences about what was inside and how it related to fall!

Farm Safety Day Camp Keeps Kids Safe

Over 100 Mitchell County fourth graders attended a Farm Safety Day Camp at the Kroneman Family Farm. The event focused on teaching kids about how to be safe on the farm and the need to share safety tips with their family and friends.

Local community members, businesses, and FFA chapters taught the farm and rural safety lessons. Olivia Logue, 4-H and youth coordinator who organized the event, said she hopes that kids share and apply the lessons learned to help to reduce the number of children who are injured in accidents.

Speaker Matt Ross of Charles City shared his story of being caught in a backhoe. Matt shared that being cautious and taking time to be safe could have prevented his accident.

The youth then visited safety workshops hosted by local FFA chapters, Channel Seed, Heartland Power, Helena Ag Enterprises, Mitchell County Farm Bureau, Osage Veterinary Clinic, Mitchell County Sheriff Department, Mitchell County Regional Health Center-Ambulance Service, and Osage and St. Ansgar Volunteer Fire Departments.

Farm Safety Day Camp was a success due to the generous support of many organizations and volunteers.

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