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 Monona County for what we all want: a strong Iowa.

Monona 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
- Food and the Environment
- Health and Well-being
- K12 Youth Outreach

Economic Development

Mapleton was the first in Iowa to pilot the Marketing Hometown America program last April. It is a guided program engaging residents through study circles. Participants work to retain their quality of life, discover overlooked assets and identify housing, recreational, educational and economic needs. The study circles identify needs and then create an action plan at the end of the 4-week session. Mapleton wanted to reverse “declining trends” and have created a strategy to reach their goals with the help of the Marketing Hometown America program. Marketing Hometown America was developed by Cooperative Extension programs in Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota. It has proven to be successful by cultivating positive actions through citizenship and community-building.

Food and Environment

Extension partnered with the ISU Western Research Farm to break ground on a donation and home demonstration garden at the Monona County Fairgrounds last May. The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Master Gardener program and ISU Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education (SNAP-Ed) Program collaborated to provide these opportunities to ensure the produce grown will reach local food pantries and reduce food insecurity across the state. As part of the Growing Together initiative, volunteers donated 1,058 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to food pantries. Approximately 500 people experiencing low income in Monona County were served this season. “Our first growing

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.

Sherry McGill
Regional Director

Brian Hobbs
Council Member

Sandy Smith
Council Member

Leland Hathaway
Extension Council Chair

Peg Ingram
Council Member

Randy Stanislav
Council Member

Sandy Bubke
Council Member

Laura Neldeberg
Council Member

Cheryl Warner
Council Member

Bruce Parker
Council Member
season at the garden was a successful one. One of Monona County’s greatest needs is getting healthy food to low-income residents. We are grateful for federal grant funds and our community partnerships and volunteers that helped the garden to be a success,” said Melissa Beermann, County Director. A home demonstration garden field day was held in August in collaboration with the ISU Research Farm, ISU Horticulturists and pollinator experts.

**Health and Well-Being**
ISU Extension specialist Renee Swears provided materials and education to approximately 60 county residents at three “Free Family Meal Nights.” Families packaged healthy meals to prepare at home and also enjoyed a healthy meal at the event. Strengthening family connections at meal time by fostering communication skills was a key point.

**K-12 Youth Outreach**
Youth in Monona County have the opportunity to participate in 4-H from K-12th grade. A variety of special interest clubs offer unique experiences. Special interest clubs include: Outdoor Adventure, Cooking, Dog, Lego, & Shooting Sports. In addition to club activities, at least 15-20 unique youth programs are offered throughout the year.

Monona County schools welcome research-based educational opportunities led by ISU Extension Staff. 4-H Youth Coordinator, Nancy McGrain has coordinated Progressive Ag since 1996. The program reaches each of the 3 school districts over a 3-year rotation. It reaches an average of 150, 3rd-6th grade students annually. ATV, bicycle and electrical safety are important.

They learn about wildlife, ponds and chemical look-a-likes. The Science Center of Iowa’s “Boom” program at West Monona reached 120, 3rd-5th graders. “Boom” educated youth about different states of matter, electricity and static and whether things could go “boom” or not.

Extension helped to establish a garden at West Monona Elementary. Three in-school sessions were held at West Monona along with an 8-week series during the summer of 2018. Youth in grades Pre-K through 6th grade learned about plant needs, pollinators, insects, soil, and more. They planted a diverse garden including herbs, vegetables and flowers. They tasted a wide variety of new vegetables. They harvested fresh produce from the garden and were provided with new healthy recipes to share with their families.

**Ag & Natural Resources**
Cattle producers and agri-business professionals participated in a tour featuring fall grazing of cover crops in the Castana area. Cover crops offer cattle producers an opportunity to extend fall grazing and reduce stored feed costs, according to Beth Doran, Beef Specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. The tour featured crops at the Western Research Farm and two producers who are successfully grazing fall cover crops. ISU Extension Ag Field Specialists topics included methods for seeding, herbicide selection for grazing, best management practices for fall grazing, and potential funding for cover crop establishment. The field day was sponsored by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach-Monona County, the Iowa Beef Center, and ISU Western Research Farm.

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