

August 1, 2020

RE: Polk County Extension COVID-19 Update

Dear ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County community partners, clients, and volunteers:

The Polk County Fair has been held for over 80 years, and through intentional planning and prioritizing safety, this year was no exception! The 81<sup>st</sup> annual Polk County Fair carried on July 18-24, providing 408 4-H and FFA youth the opportunity to display and exhibit their work despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. County fair officials adjusted the experience by virtually judging projects, providing minimal contact livestock shows, and limiting entry to keep crowds down. In a summer where so many of our youth missed out on milestones and events, I am pleased that the Polk County Fair offered this one bit of normalcy safely.

The Polk County Fair was just one of the many events and programs we adjusted this summer because of the coronavirus pandemic. Polk County Extension also offered a variety of online experiences to ensure residents of all ages kept on learning, things like:

- **Splash into Reading:** Preschool parents joined Family Life Educators via Zoom to learn early literacy techniques and engaging activities.
- **[Vegetable Container Gardening](#):** This video, narrated by the Polk County Master Gardener Coordinator, offered practical advice and “how-tos” in growing fresh produce in containers – a method that makes gardening accessible to almost everyone!
- **Bilingual Baby Showers:** These virtual baby showers, a partnership with Nutrition 4 Young Children, allowed Extension professionals to provide moms-to-be with information and resources to support a healthy pregnancy.

As we turn our attention to back-to-school and fall programming, Polk County Extension will continue to make decisions based on the guidance and recommendations of local county health officials – the Polk County Health Department, Polk County Emergency Management, and other Polk County government leaders. With recent local data showing a dramatic rise of COVID-19 cases within Polk County, we have to reconsider our reopening timeline. What does this mean? Unfortunately, it means that we will not open our doors to the public or deliver in-person programs for the foreseeable future.

However, rest assured we are working, just a little differently. **Our commitment to serving Iowans has not changed.** Just like this past summer, we’ll continue to innovate how we deliver programs, expand our online offerings, and bring you the research-based resources to help you during this constantly changing time.

At times it can seem like there have been few positives to come from this pandemic, but one of them is greater collaboration between one another to meet the needs of our community. So, let’s continue to collaborate and communicate. Please reach out to me, or any of the [Polk County Extension staff](#), with questions, concerns, or opportunities. Let’s work together to find ways in which we leverage one another to meet the needs of residents while maintaining the health and safety of each other and our community. I look forward to hearing from you!

Stay well and stay healthy,



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PS – Please remember to visit the [Polk County Extension Online Resources webpage](#) for updated reliable, research-based education and resources to help you care for your families, manage stress, or support your community, business, or farm.