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News Release
Contact: Teresa Wiemerslage, Communications Coordinator, 563-794-0599, wiemer@iastate.edu

Food & Farm Expo Set for Feb. 5

CALMAR – Mirroring the growing national movement in regional food production and healthier living, northeast Iowans have shown an increased interest in purchasing locally produced food. Farmers interested in growing or producing food for these growing local markets should make plans to attend the Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Expo on Saturday, February 5 at the NE IA Dairy Foundation Center in Calmar.

The Expo will have a wide variety of exhibitors covering educational information, materials, equipment, seed and supplies. Four educational sessions will be offered on marketing local foods, food safety, selling to schools and a food buyer panel. Assistants will be available to help you list your product on various websites.

Admission is free and lunch will be available to purchase on site. For more information about the expo or to have a display, call Teresa Wiemerslage at (563) 794-0599 or visit www.iowafreshfood.com.

The expo is hosted by the Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition which is part of the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative--a partner of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Community program. The coalition is creating opportunities for farmers to engage in the local food system through production, processing, distribution, storage and market opportunities.

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News Release
Upper Explorerland, ISU Extension to co-locate in Decorah

DECORAH -- Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) and Iowa State University (ISU) Extension are excited to announce the co-location of their offices. ISU Extension will be relocating their Winneshiek County office to the facility currently housing UERPC at 325 Washington Street, Decorah.

This partnership is a win-win for both entities as well as for the clients they both serve. Both organizations have a long history of cooperation, but co-location will further enhance opportunities for partnering to improve the quality of life in Northeast Iowa.

“We are fortunate to have support from the leaders of our respective organizations and from our community who see the tremendous synergies that arise from collaboration. We both cover the same region, and both have the betterment of our region as a primary mission. It is truly a natural partnership,” said Aaron Burkes, Executive Director of Upper Explorerland.

“The relocation of the Winneshiek County Extension office will allow us to continue to meet the needs of area youth, families, farmers, and businesses that we have always served,” said Brenda Ranum, Regional Extension Education Director for Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, Chickasaw, Howard and Fayette counties. “It opens new doors for us in the areas of community and economic development as we work to boost entrepreneurialism and further develop a local healthy food system and design environments supporting active living.”

With offices in every county in Iowa, ISU Extension brings the research and resources of Iowa State University to local communities. ISU Extension’s commitment to healthy people, healthy environments and healthy economies is strong in northeast Iowa, with dedicated staff, council members, and volunteers that tailor ISU Extension’s efforts to address local issues and improve quality of life.

UERPC will continue to offer assistance in the areas of economic and community development, transportation planning, housing assistance, and employment and training programs. UERPC primarily operates out of Postville and Decorah, but they have satellite offices in Cresco, New Hampton, Oelwein, Elkader and Waukon as well.

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission was created in 1972 to promote regional cooperation and meet the planning and economic development needs of local governments in the 52 cities and five Northeast Iowa counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties. Since 1972, UERPC has helped the region obtain over $176 million in federal and state grant funds to assist the cities and counties they serve. It also serves as the fiscal agent for Region1 Employment and Training.

For more information on what Upper Explorerland has to offer visit their website at www.uerpc.org or email aburkes@uerpc.org.

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News Release
Learn to Use Quickbooks for Your Farm or Business

OELWEIN -- Set a goal to organize your farm or business finances in the new year. Get started now by setting up Quickbooks to take advantage of the efficiency and organization you can gain by using the program. Quickbooks manages all the financial records for a single business.

Fayette County Economic Development is hosting a Quickbooks Workshop series in Oelwein. The workshop is a three-part series held on Feb. 15, 24 and Mar. 3 from 6-8 pm. Participants will learn how to set up accounts receivable and payable and how to prepare invoices and bills. Quickbooks can manage your inventory and keep track of the number of items in stock and the value of your inventory after every purchase and sale. Quickbooks Payroll is a quick and convenient way to pay your employees at each pay period.

The class will be taught by CPAs from Gritton Associates of Manchester. The workshop series is coordinated by Fayette County Economic Development Group, NE Iowa Business Network, ISU Extension, the NE IA Food & Farm Coalition, and the Community Vitality Center. The cost is $25 per person to attend.

For more information or to register, contact Fayette County Economic Development at 563-422-5073.

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News Release

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Erin Ludwig, Extension Specialist, 563-380-1475 or eludwig@iastate.edu

Free Tax Preparation Services Available

NORtheast IOWA -- Families with low to moderate earned income can save by having their taxes prepared by certified, volunteer tax preparers. Since volunteer preparers electronically file returns, refunds can usually be directly deposited in a bank account within 7-14 days. This free service is provided in Waukon, Postville, Elma, Cresco, Decorah, Calmar, and New Hampton.

To make an appointment with a volunteer tax preparer, use the following contact numbers: Waukon: 563-568-6345; Decorah, Calmar or Postville: 563-380-4321; Cresco: 563-547-3001; Elma: 641-393-8408; or New Hampton: 641-394-3173.

Volunteer tax assistance is offered by the AARP and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs throughout Iowa. Call 1-800-829-1040 to locate the nearest VITA site. Call 1-888-227-7669 to locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site. For more information about family financial issues, contact ISU Extension Family Resource Management Specialist Erin Ludwig at 563-380-1475 or eludwig@iastate.edu.

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Leopold Center Offers Plan to Boost Local Food Economy in Iowa

AMES -- A new statewide plan would boost the local food economy and increase opportunities for those who want to buy or sell Iowa-raised meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fruit, vegetables and other crops in local and regional markets.

These recommendations are part of the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan, submitted this week to the Iowa Legislature by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. During last year’s legislative session, the Center was asked to provide specific policy and funding actions that would support and expand local and regional food systems in Iowa.

The Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan has 34 recommendations, including creation of a state-level local food and farm program, education and training for producers and local food businesses, changes in state policy to benefit local food businesses, and data collection to track growth of local food sales. The plan calls for a one-year state appropriation to hire a local food and farm state coordinator. In subsequent years, the position and cost to implement other recommendations would be supported by a voluntary Local Food and Farm Program Fund.

“Iowa has the potential to grow the local food economy with strategic but modest investments, incentives, and better coordination of existing resources,” said Rich Pirog, Leopold Center associate director who led development of the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan.

Pirog said the 2010 amendment requiring the Leopold Center to develop the plan asked for actionable items that would increase local food production and marketing in Iowa. “The Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan truly is a plan, not just a set of recommendations,” he explained. “The plan offers specific actions, and for each action the plan outlines why it is important, who would implement it, where resources would come from, and the benefits.”

More than 1,000 people from 95 of Iowa’s 99 counties contributed to the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan. Information was gathered at workshops, 15 listening sessions throughout the state and two surveys. The draft recommendations were discussed with leaders of 21 state agencies, institutions and organizations. Local members of the Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition contributed to the plan.

According to the plan, the state has an opportunity to increase sales of local food, estimated to account for only 14 percent of the $8 billion each year that Iowans spend on food. The plan is designed to increase direct-to-consumer sales as well as retail and institutional sales by providing the infrastructure, research and development, and incentives to support increased local food production and marketing. Farmers and local food businesses are expected to see benefits with increases in profitability and market venues, and communities are expected to benefit from additional jobs.

Local food and farm plans have been developed in at least a dozen other states and regions including Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, North Carolina and the City of New York. The Leopold Center was asked to
lead development of a plan in Iowa because the research center, located at Iowa State University, has created partnerships and networks for local food throughout the state as a result of its programs.

Pirog said an unintended but positive part of the past year’s work on the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan has been relationships built among those interested in seeing local foods contribute more to the state’s economy and communities. Pirog writes in the plan: “Together, we can make a vibrant local food economy a reality to the benefit of Iowa farmers, entrepreneurs, and communities, and add another chapter to Iowa’s storied agricultural heritage.”

Among the 34 recommendations, only two require state appropriations. They are to: hire a statewide coordinator for a Local Food and Farm Program (to be supported by a voluntary funding mechanism after year one); and provide two years of support to Iowa’s Farm-to-School Program.

Other recommendations include:
  * Creation of a Local Food and Farm Program Fund to support local food programs from the sale of collectible local food posters, bumper stickers, stamps and license plates,
  * Business development and financial assistance for farmers and local food businesses,
  * Food and meat processing education and training programs,
  * Food safety education, and a pilot cost-share program for food safety audits,
  * Business training programs that target beginning, minority or transitioning farmers,
  * Data collection to assess progress and track state agency and educational institution purchases of local foods, and
  * Pilot incentive programs for five K-12 school districts and five health care facilities that serve Iowa produce.

To get a copy of the 63-page Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan, go to the Leopold Center website at: www.leopold.iastate.edu/foodandfarmplan.html, or request a copy by calling the Leopold Center office at (515) 294-3711.

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**Other News Releases**

1/12/2011 – Annual Forest Stewardship Conference Is March 12
The 2011 Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference is Saturday, March 12, at Sinsinawa Mound Center, Sinsinawa, Wis. The conference annually draws 550 woodland landowners from Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa.

This information has been sent to you by Teresa Wiemerslage, Regional Communications Coordinator for Region 4 ISU Extension, wiemer@iastate.edu. 563-794-0599.

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