

VICE PRESIDENT LAWRENCE'S  
**COVID-19**  
**Exceptional Effort**  
**Awards Recipients**

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAM DELIVERY

### 4-H Distance Learning Team

#### Names of Nominees:

- Abigail Stanek
- Bonnie Dalager
- Hannah Dibble
- Sara Nelson
- Anindita Das
- Katie Peterson
- Andrea Hobson
- Mollie Clark
- Shelby Van Horn
- Amy Powell
- Beth Bunkers
- Brenda Welch
- Haley Jones
- Maya Hayslett
- Marisue Hartung
- Lexy Davies
- Cayla Taylor
- Amy Schmitt
- Tillie Good
- Earl McAlexander
- Sarah Fiddelke
- Kiersten Gatewood
- Megan Freel
- Amy Forrette
- Laura Liechty
- JeanDarrell Waybill
- Madeleine Bretey
- Benjamin Pullen

**Nominator:** Ben Pullen

Watch the [ignite video](#).

It was evident that 2020 4-H educational programming would need to be delivered in innovative formats as a result of increased health and safety concerns related to COVID-19. A team of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach 4-H youth development professionals quickly organized to develop research-based innovative programming to continue meeting the educational needs of Iowa's youth remotely.

The team developed a continuum of programs, meeting specific identified needs of youth through short-term, immersive, and extended educational opportunities. The team utilized a program planning pyramid design. At the base was professional development on effective distance learning that was developed and delivered by team members in May. The first step of the pyramid was designed to bring awareness and increase interest through 4-H On the Go. The second step of the pyramid looked to increase engagement and offer short-term outcomes through Clover Crates. At the top of the pyramid was Gardening to Give, which was designed to be an in-depth, long-term, educational experience with long-term outcomes. Each of these levels were new to the Iowa 4-H program both in programs and delivery mode.

### On the Go Lessons: Short-Term Learning

The team developed a template grounded in positive youth development practices, with a branded design and locally customizable layout. They were designed to be used with a paper bag containing the supplies needed to complete the learning activity. Campus, field, and county 4-H professionals collaborated to publish 26 lessons, with over 4,000 downloads, and over 26,000 individual kits being distributed across Iowa. Counties reported impacts included reaching new audiences and unrepresented populations and an appreciation from families and staff on a process that built their local capacity as well as established new partnerships.

### Clover Crates: Immersive Learning

Clover Crates are take-home camps with optional virtual components that enable youth to participate in camp activities at home with other youth. This summer 2,710 Clover Crates were dispersed statewide. Clover Crates contain all the supplies and support resources needed for youth to complete the learning experience. Activities can be completed with an educator, as a family activity, or independently. Thirty-four Clover Crates experiences were developed and disseminated statewide.

### Gardening to Give: Extended Learning

The Gardening to Give program was designed for Iowans of all ages and abilities to get involved in the gardening process as a family or independently. Weekly lessons ranged from types of gardens, tools, plant diseases, food preservation, and donating produce to local food banks and pantries. The program engaged more than 1,000 individuals from 339 households from 82 Iowa counties, and five states. In an evaluation of participants, respondents indicated that they plan to have a garden next year. One participant shared, "I learned that I can help others right in our own community."

These efforts began in response to the pandemic, yet this team was very intentional in developing educational programs that would continue to be effective and accessible throughout 2020 and into post-pandemic educational programming for Iowa's youth.

## Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Work Group

**Names of Nominees:** All nominees are from the CED work group for Rural Housing Readiness Assessment: Eric Christianson, Abigail Gaffey, Omar Padilla, Julie Robison, Sara Shonrock, Scott Timm, Jon Wolseth

**Nominator:** Gary Taylor

Watch the [ignite video](#).

In March 2020, the Housing and Local Government Team (Housing Team) within CED were poised to launch the Rural Housing Readiness Assessment (RHRA) program statewide, in conjunction with funding provided through the Empower Rural Iowa grants program administered by the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Ten communities would go through the RHRA and then receive \$10,000 to apply to housing-related goals that surfaced from the workshop. If the Empower Rural Iowa grants were not utilized in the current fiscal year, the dollars would revert, and Iowa communities would have one less resource to help them address housing issues.

In the span of one month, the Housing Team converted the RHRA program from a complex three-part face-to-face series into an interactive, virtual workshop experience. Working with other CED specialists the Housing Team researched platform options, virtual meeting best practices, and attended trainings from professionals in the fields of virtual facilitation and course design. The team adopted a positive attitude and a “learn by doing” philosophy, volunteering to facilitate meetings while trying out new skills and finding techniques to suit the RHRA material.

The Housing Team decided on using a combination of Zoom and Miro, a virtual whiteboard application. They built workshop templates in Miro and scripted a process utilizing Zoom features such as breakout rooms and polling to simulate discussion groups and the interactive work teams that were the backbone of the face-to-face program. All of this required teamwork, coordination, and a fervor for learning new skills. They mapped out a process of team learning to master the complexity of the program that has eased into cross-training and efficiency. What started out as “all hands on deck” has led to understanding the most efficient combination of specialists and technology needed to deliver programs smoothly.

The transition to virtual delivery, however, involved more than building team proficiency. The team needed to assure Empower Rural Iowa grantors that communities would be able to participate virtually. Grantors also had to be convinced that a virtual process was a viable and enjoyable option. In addition to providing the content of the workshops, the Housing Team also then trained community members in how to use the technology. This ran the gamut from how to download and install software to video conferencing etiquette and modelling virtual facilitation best practices.

In total, the Housing Team self-educated, were their own design team, facilitation coach, IT support, and content area specialists. They did so without support from IT or Professional Development, who were swamped in meeting basic needs of extension's move to virtual education.

Since April, the team has successfully navigated four communities (Ida Grove, Creston, Manning, and Stanton) through the complete virtual workshop, representing eight contact hours per community using virtual facilitation methods. Seven additional communities are at various stages in the process. In recognition of the successful turn toward virtual delivery, Empower Rural Iowa has secured additional funding for ten more communities to be awarded in May 2021.

## REMOTE INSTRUCTION

### **TEAM: Sara Shonrock and Amanda Eggers, CED**

**Nominator:** Gary Taylor

Watch the [ignite video](#).

For two weeks every July for almost five decades, approximately 300 municipal professionals from across Iowa have gathered in Ames to receive training and instruction that municipal employees rely on for the successful operation of their cities. Preparation for the Iowa Municipal Professionals Institute (MPI) and Academy (MPA) begins as soon as the previous event ends so when the COVID-19 pandemic struck the U.S., the 2020 event was in the final planning stages.

In March 2020, the two-person team consisting of Sara Shonrock – in her second year as MPI director, and Amanda Eggers – the new program coordinator in her first week on the job, were faced with two options. The team could either cancel the upcoming in-person event completely or create an interactive virtual training that still provided approved courses for certification by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) and the Iowa Municipal Finance Officers Association (IMFOA). Despite numerous obstacles, a looming deadline, and the mounting pandemic, the team chose to move the courses virtual.

The Institute and Academy offers 44 courses of varying lengths and diverse subject matter. Attendees are able to register based on their personal availability, the educational needs of their city, and the certification credits needed. To qualify for certification credit by IIMC and IMFOA, all courses were required to be live and participants were to be engaged and accounted for the entire session. Sara and Amanda worked with the accrediting bodies to receive waivers that allowed them to conduct MPI and MPA virtually, and then began the process of moving the two-week, traditionally in-person event into a virtual format. Because registration opened in February 2020, registered attendees planned for the July dates and courses, which did not allow for flexibility or changes to the schedule.

With a few laptops, the will to succeed, and colleagues providing support, plans were readied. They researched and found a cloud-based learning management system that could be built and maintained by them for MPI's specific participants. This system allowed them to own and brand their own domain and gave them the ability to manage the event without overwhelming already inundated university servers. With over 400 users, 44 courses, multiple simultaneously-live classes, hundreds of class documents, and embedded communication platforms, they took the event to the furthest reaches of the state. The team researched best practices to keep attendees engaged, coordinated

preview sessions to assist attendees in using the programs, and assisted instructors with teaching on a virtual platform. Using Zoom, Adobe Connect and the learning management system, 301 people successfully completed MPI and MPA just as if they had attended in-person. The 2020 Institute and Academy ended with record high attendance and rave reviews from attendees. The experience was so well-received that the 2021 MPI and beyond will be delivered to attendees as a hybrid virtual/in-person experience throughout the year, ensuring that city employees across the state will gain necessary educational components they need.

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## **INDIVIDUAL: Warren Pierson**

**Nominator:** Meaghan Anderson

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Each spring, the ISU Field Extension Education Lab (FEEL) hosts an in-person Field Crop Scouting Basics workshop to train approximately 50-60 field crop scouts and farmers in crop growth and development, and identification of weeds, insects, and diseases. The workshop focuses on hands-on and timely education through primarily outdoor activities. With the cancellation of in-person events due to COVID-19, there was still significant interest in training crop scouts for the 2020 growing season. Program specialist and FEEL coordinator Warren Pierson developed a free, online webinar consisting of an abbreviated version of the in-person workshop. For this effort, the ISU Crops Team would like to nominate him for the Excellence in Remote Instruction Award. This was one of the first of many innovative online programs to balance the needs and attention spans of clientele. The program provided the reliable, research-based education ISU Extension and Outreach is known for and valuable Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) credits to a clientele facing significant uncertainty during a pandemic.

The Field Crop Scouting Basics workshop was offered via Webex on May 14, 2020, in two 2-hour segments containing short, 30-minute presentations given by five ISU Extension and Outreach faculty and staff to fit work schedules and attention spans. Participants pre-registered so attendance and CCA credit reporting could be completed. While the topics were similar to the in-person workshop normally offered, presenters focused on sharing tips and resources in an abbreviated and interactive format. Most presentations included poll questions or discussion to keep the topics informative and engaging. Participants were also encouraged to type questions and comments into the chat box feature of Webex. Sessions were recorded and posted in short, accessible segments to the ISU Crops Team YouTube channel.

A follow-up survey of the attendees further demonstrated the success of this virtual format. Over 77% of respondents rated their experience with the program as “very good” or “excellent.” On average, respondents rated registration, joining the webinar, audio quality, and video quality as above a 4.4 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being most satisfactory. Many participants complimented the webinar in comments.

- “The webinar was clear and concise. Thank you!”
- “Excellent for a brush up just before we get to the field.”
- “I believe [the webinar] approach should be used in the future even under non self distancing guidelines.”
- “The flexibility of this type of scouting education was very helpful.”

The workshop had incredible reach beyond the typical workshop. The online program had 725 registered attendees from 17 different states and six countries outside of the United States; 567 attendees participated live, including 121 Certified Crop Advisers receiving valuable continuing education units; 63% of survey respondents noted it was their first Field Crop Scout Workshop they’d participated in. Following the event, the online webinar segments have been viewed on YouTube over 1,800 times.

While this effort was supported by a team, Warren Pierson facilitated the presenters and participants with ease and expertise to transform a familiar program into something virtual that was valuable and well-attended by clientele.



## COMMUNITY RESPONSE

### Melissa Loux

**Nominator:** Sarah Merrifield

Watch the [ignite video](#).

I would like to nominate Melissa “Missy” Loux for the Excellence in Community Response to COVID-19 Award. Missy has gone above and beyond in carrying out the mission of ISU Extension and Outreach and creating exceptional efforts to assist her community and identifying needs she sees in Wright County.

When the shutdown impacted area businesses, she went out to talk to them face to face, using precautions, to identify what small town businesses needed and their concerns. She utilized materials from Community and Economic Development that were shared to her from specialists. She then went one step further and followed up with the businesses to ensure their needs were being met or how Wright County Extension could help them. She made the effort to recognize their importance to the community and wanted them to know she was a point of information she could volunteer to them.

She also saw the need for food pantries. Due to her response, she has created a food pantry coalition that involves all the Wright County food pantries. This coalition created an up-to-date guide for individuals to access their local resources. This brought the food pantries together and helped them recognize a common goal. This also inspired her to create a Human Services Coalition, which is now leading to an online parenting series that she is offering to community members. This series will provide activities at home for parents to do with their children plus has information for mental health and parenting.

On top of it all, she saw local farmers struggling with mental health among other things during this pandemic. Missy took it upon herself to find a local partner and create farmer bags that had mental health resources provided through ISU Extension and Outreach, snacks, and tools they can use during harvest. She distributed 150 bags to local farmers in need. This was a very successful program as she was able to make 150 contacts with local Wright County residents. It was so well received that she is now working on expanding the program for the spring session.

Overall, Missy is a true example of an extension professional. She sees a need, uses her resources from the university, and implements them into her community. Her passion is hard to compete with and her positive attitude is uplifting for everyone around her. She is a prime example of someone who is worthy for the Excellence in Community Response to COVID-19 Award.

## Steph Erpelding

**Nominator:** Brenda Welch

Watch the [ignite video](#).

During the spring and summer of 2020, Stephanie Erpelding, the Sac County youth coordinator, worked tirelessly to reach the youth of Sac County. Starting on March 16, 2020, Steph created an 11-week series of daily weekday activities for youth to do. Monday videos were Snacks or Supper with Steph; Tuesdays were Stretching with Steph; Wednesdays were Science with Steph; Thursdays were Safety with Steph; and Fridays were Service with Steph.

In April, Steph had this to say about her video series, “The night I heard from Governor Reynolds that the schools were closed for four weeks, I knew I had to do something for the youth in Sac County. With the recent news, I couldn’t sleep that night, so I made up a plan to showcase things that started with an S since it worked to say...with Steph. I promoted this to my youth program specialist, and she thought it was a great idea, so I ran with it! In two weeks, I have had close to 11,000 views just posting one video a day. The State 4-H Office, Iowa 4-H Foundation, and many other extension offices across the state have shared my videos. With this small idea of reaching Sac County youth it has rolled into something so much larger than I ever expected!”

Over the course of eleven weeks, March 16-May 29, Steph made 55 Facebook videos and had 40,000 views. She was interviewed by the local newspaper and featured in a front-page article. Steph even has had people asking for her autograph. The videos can be found at the “ISU Extension and Outreach-Sac County Extension” Facebook page.

After all of the videos, Steph didn’t stop working to help youth in Sac County. During the summer, she partnered with the Sac City Public Library to offer STEAM activities for youth in 3rd-7th grade. These kits were available to families for free due to a DECAT grant. Steph started off by offering 20 kits, which were placed in front of the library for families to take. There was such a huge demand for the kits that Steph had to pack 40 more! Each activity kit contained seven different STEAM activities for youth to do at home with their family.

Steph Erpelding has worked tirelessly during this time to reach the youth of Sac County.

## TEAM EFFORT OR UNIT

### Iowa Beef Center

**Nominator:** Dan Loy, Russ Euken, Denise Schwab, Ericka Lundy

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Beef producers and the entire industry faced many unique challenges due to COVID-19. Packing plant disruptions delayed marketing of fed cattle and ethanol production slowed, limiting availability of corn co-products for feed. Supply and demand issues affected the industry, while typical production issues still existed. In response the Iowa Beef Center addressed these issues in several ways, using alternative delivery methods to reach clients.

One early effort was a two-part webinar “Feedlot Considerations Amid the Pandemic,” which addressed feeding cattle to heavier market weights, slowing gain of cattle, and changing diets due to the limited availability of corn co-products. One hundred eighty participants viewed the live webinars and 380 have since viewed the recordings. A companion fact sheet was also developed, which has been downloaded 1,060 times. The Iowa Beef Center partnered with Iowa Cattlemen’s Association (ICA), other universities, and private industry in this effort.

Obscure and unprecedented supply and demand dynamics were major issues that team member Dr. Lee Schulz addressed mainly through media and weekly consultation with commodity groups and government officials. The ISU Office of Strategic Relations and Communications estimated Dr. Schulz had reached 211 million through the media in just a two-week period in early April and related media requests continue to date. A research paper that Dr. Schulz co-authored addressed market pricing at the farm and retail level that has garnered media attention and subsequent USDA investigations and federal civil suits.

Based on the success of the early feedlot webinars, the Iowa Beef Center again partnered with ICA to develop a 12-part Facebook video series on “Controlling Cow Costs” addressing timely topics for cow-calf producers to improve profitability. ICA aided in developing video topics and was a key player in disseminating the resource. The short videos reached nearly 28,000 people on Facebook with over 1,500 views on YouTube.

Additional efforts addressing typical issues included the following:

- The multi-state Dairy Beef Short Course transitioned to Zoom from in person; 160 producers from 24 states participated in the virtual session.

- A four-part webinar on breeding season management reached 519 participants from 12 states through live and recorded sessions. Those viewing the live webinar help manage 61,000 cows.
- The annual in-person veterinarian update held in May was also transitioned to webinar format; 71 veterinarians participated, tripling typical attendance. Iowa plus 11 states were represented.
- A typical in-person Beef Quality Assurance certification session was offered virtually and 37 participants who needed recertification were able to market cattle as a result of attending.
- With inability for live conferences, the annual silage conference co-sponsored with the University of Nebraska was held virtually. The effort reached 1,330 from 30 countries through live and recorded views.
- Another addition to programming as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions are short 1 to 2-minute videos via Facebook on timely topics and referencing an ISU Extension and Outreach resource. In one month, four videos have reached 5,053 people with 713 engagements.

## SUPPORT FOR STAFF OR COLLEAGUES

### UNIT: Advancement

#### Names of Nominees:

- Jed Findlay
- Jordyn Harrison
- Laura Sternweis
- Jolene McCoy
- Natasha Neal
- Julie Hlas
- Cindy Gannon
- Karen Lathrop
- Megan Bagley
- Lauren Carter
- Leah Feltz
- Bridgette Heisterkamp
- Linda Young

**Nominator:** Julie Hlas

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Throughout the pandemic the Advancement unit has been at the front lines, helping staff navigate the ever-changing COVID-19 situation. From transitioning our annual conference from in-person to virtual in mere weeks to working with committees such as Open for Iowa and the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, Advancement has provided graphics, copy writing, editing, video, social media, event planning, and strategic thinking on how to get our best resources and communication tools to our staff, counties, and specialists.

Our multimedia/creative services department designed and produced 22 new pieces of COVID-related support materials for staff to use on campus and in county offices. COVID-related videos were produced including Here for You and Iowa Concern. Fourteen Facebook live webinars were hosted to help ISU Extension and Outreach engage Iowans' eyes, hearts, and minds.

Open for Iowa resources Advancement assisted with included:

- Face coverings and universal precaution signs
- Handwashing signs
- Meeting/event signs
- Office open and closed signs
- Safe distance decals
- Wi-Fi for virtual instruction sign
- Contact information sign and Excel document
- County emergency resources and templates
- Iowa Concern and AnswerLine PSAs and banner

- Newspaper ads
- Phone message scripts
- Social media image banners and sample text
- COVID 19 registration statements and thank you messages
- Hand sanitizer and mask promo items

Cyclones Care efforts produced:

- 77 print pieces
- 37 digital images
- 22 specialty pieces (stickers, t-shirt, vinyls, yard signs, billboard, and bus ads)
- 5 banners

Our writing staff worked with the Vice President's office to ensure concise, timely, well-written information was delivered from leadership. Advancement specialists served on COVID task force committees, worked with regional directors, and made sure all county staff were aware of Open for Iowa resources.

Advancement worked with counties to raise \$17,500 in county contributions for 2020 organizational marketing to ensure Iowans knew ISU Extension and Outreach was open for business and working hard.

Nearly \$30,000 has been contributed by county offices for a 2021 awareness campaign. The team developed new communication tools and updated the 2020 stakeholder reports to reflect our impacts during this unusual time. They cross marketed resources to extension staff through the Advancement Update newsletter, emails from advancement specialists to their regions, and the Advancement page on MyExtension. They worked with extension staff system-wide to create a disaster recovery webpage to house public resources for COVID-19 and made accompanying resource pages to support staff for special efforts such as Open for Iowa and stakeholder reports. They continue to maintain and update webpages with the latest information.

Advancement also delivered virtual trainings including eight webinars and eight Did You Know segments, sharing information and allowing those at all levels of our organization to ask questions and be heard. Since March there have been hundreds of COVID and disaster related posts on our statewide social media.

It takes the efforts of an entire organization to "pivot" as ISU Extension and Outreach has during this pandemic. Advancement has functioned as the grease that kept the wheels rolling.

## **INDIVIDUAL: Brittany Demezier**

**Nominator:** Ray Kruse

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Brittany has worked diligently to navigate the hoops of setting up social media platform accounts for the Dubuque County office. Though every office probably has a tech savvy colleague managing digital content, her efforts didn't just stop with the creation of social media accounts. With Dubuque County's Facebook page, Brittany communicated with her fellow Dubuque County office team to identify posting guidelines and create a post schedule. This enabled our office's information to be seen by more clients. Her platform coordination has resulted in such success, that when fellow local program coordinators and state specialists post material on the Facebook page, her colleagues can gain traction with their programs from the research and hard work she has put in to make our county's extension page visible.

When Brittany left for maternity leave in June during the COVID-19 pandemic, she planned ahead and designed a social media posting plan that was carried out successfully. Upon her return, she reevaluated the Facebook page and generated another plan on how we could keep our momentum going. Our county's extension Facebook page now has 1,702 page followers. She is now continuing to develop our county's YouTube channel followers, enabling us to reach more clients across multiple online platforms.

This momentum has been essential for our office to reach clients with the increased traffic of online activities, when we post programs or information during the pandemic. Whether we are informing our clients about a program on how honey is produced (2,395 people reached on Facebook) or simply informing folks about Dubuque County's ancient soils (2,060 people reached on Facebook) Her hard work is paying off and it is obvious.

Brittany's efforts have not only resulted in a platform that supports connections for her programs, her efforts support us all here at the Dubuque County office in making program connections. During the pandemic, this has been essential for our office to serve lowans of Dubuque County, and she deserves to be recognized.

## SUPPORT FOR PARTNER ORGANIZATION

### Judy Dittmar

**Nominator:** Christine Hradek and Katie Sorrell

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Judy Dittmar serves as an Iowa State University Extension and Outreach healthy food access specialist in western Iowa. She supports food pantries in making healthy choices easier for families with low income. She also provides direct education opportunities for Iowans interested in improving their food choices and stretching their food dollars. Judy's priority audience of Iowans with limited resources was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Judy has maintained her steady focus on connecting Iowans with healthy foods that are accessible within their current resources throughout the pandemic and doing so has required that she navigate significant challenges.

In response to the pandemic, the United States Department of Agriculture supplied fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, and meat products to organizations serving Americans with low income. These foods, packaged in Farmers to Families Food Boxes, were transported to locations by semi-trucks. Local organizations were tasked with coordinating logistics and the distribution of the boxes that arrived in a semi-load of over 1,000 family-sized boxes. The boxes had to be distributed within two hours of delivery and required a loading dock or a fork lift and jack. The boxes were wonderfully received by those in need, but the logistics of distributing the massive quantities, specifically in rural communities, was difficult. Navigating these challenges is where Judy shines.

Judy took the lead in disseminating information about the Farmers to Families Food Boxes to county partners. She communicated with 18 counties in western Iowa through the regional directors and directly called local emergency food system organizations to let them know about the boxes. She tirelessly helped organizations connect to split the large semi-loads of boxes and assisted in the logistics of the distributions. She spoke directly with the Iowa distributors to ensure that these boxes would reach rural Iowa communities. She was a critical hub for emergency food system partners working on this project.

As a result of her impact, there were at least nine distributions in eight counties that delivered more than 5,300 food boxes in southwest rural Iowa. Each participating Iowan received a 30-pound box of food that included a gallon of milk, fresh meat, cheese, and produce. In addition, Judy supplied over 3,700 boxes with Finding Answers Now flyers and/or Spend Smart. Eat Smart. recipe cards that corresponded with the items in the



box. It is quite possible that rural distributions would not have happened without Judy's work to coordinate organizations and connect a wide network of partners.

We are now in round four of these distributions, and Judy continues to serve as the expert and point of contact to partner organizations for these boxes. She is directly addressing food access, one of the six priority areas of the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach's COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Judy has gone above and beyond to ensure access and equity for rural communities and Iowans experiencing food insecurity through her partnerships.

See Judy in action at a [Farmers to Families Food Box Distribution in Shenandoah](#).

## IMPACT

### TEAM: Question. Persuade. Refer.

#### Names of Nominees:

- Dr. David Brown
- Danielle Day
- Dawn Dunnegan

**Nominator:** Dawn Dunnegan

Watch the [ignite video](#).

On average someone dies by suicide every 18 hours in Iowa. Total suicide rates in Iowa have increased 36.2% since 1999. Thanks to a grant from USDA/NIFA, Human Sciences Extension and Outreach has been offering the suicide gatekeeper training, Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) virtually since April. The target audience has been agribusiness professionals or those in high-risk professions. From April through October there were 570 participants in the 40 one-hour programs offered.

QPR is an evidence-informed suicide prevention gatekeeper training. Those participating in QPR learn to recognize the warning signs of people in distress. Participants were taught how to intervene with a person who may be suicidal by asking the suicide question, persuading the individual to want to live and accept help, and then referring them to professionals in their area or crisis hotlines.

Dr. David Brown, Danielle Day, and Dawn Dunnegan received their QPR certifications and began strategizing to offer the suicide prevention training across the state in January 2020. Then the pandemic hit. There were predictions made of an increased suicide risk due to the economic impact and the social impact of social distancing related to the pandemic.

The team responded. After several meetings and communications with the QPR Institute, approval was received to move the program online. Dr. Brown developed the online program, based upon the QPR provided template and wrote the relevant scenarios used in the training. A Qualtrics survey based upon the QPR evaluation format was developed to gather pre-and post-test data. The team began meeting and practicing how to effectively and efficiently offer the training online.

On April 6, 2020, the team piloted the QPR Training with ISU Extension and Outreach Ag and Natural Resources Professionals. We wanted this group to provide feedback and experience the program that would be provided to agribusiness professionals.

Then the derecho struck.

Word spread. After many successful presentations to lowans, Dr. Brown marketed the program to the North Central Region Extension partners. Once that occurred, individuals from across the country began registering for and completing the virtual training. Participants attended from 14 states and two territories in Canada.

The outcomes were significant. Participants represented various state extension services, the banking industry, public health, cooperatives, commodity groups, USDA, human services, schools, colleges, government agencies, and more.

Pre- and post-test results indicated that 70.73% of participants completing evaluations rated their knowledge of how to ask a person about suicide as high, as compared to 13.84% at pre-test. It was also found that 54.70% of participants rated their knowledge of how to persuade a person to get help as high, as compared to 11.78% at pre-test and finally, 70.98% of participants rated their knowledge of how to get help for someone as high, as compared to 19.95% at pre-test.

The team had the opportunity to share their successful work at the virtual 2020 Midwest Rural Agriculture Safety and Health Conference in November 2020.

We feel that our immediate response has most likely saved lives.

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## **INDIVIDUAL: Leah Feltz**

**Nominator:** Barbara Dunn Swanson

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Helping people gain access to reliable information and education when they need it most is one of the cornerstones of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. According to Pew Research Center, 53% of Americans say the internet is where they have turned for information during the COVID-19 pandemic. Leah Feltz, a social media specialist with Advancement, has made accessing research-based, timely information across extension disciplines her work. This has helped ensure farmers, families, youth, and all communities have accurate, up-to-date information at their fingertips. Leah uses multiple platforms to ensure the timely release of relevant information, including live feeds on Facebook and Instagram.

Impact of social media efforts:

- Gained over 800 new Facebook followers
- Posts reached 767,832 people on Facebook alone, from March – October 2020

- Creation of a new live series: Tips from an Expert, where extension specialists share research that meets lowan's realities and provides answers to questions in real-time

Leah has hosted 12 episodes highlighting gardening, small business support, parenting in a pandemic, prepping bees for winter, harvest safety and derecho support for farmers and homeowners, and more. Thus far, all 12 videos have garnered 15,654 views.

Leah's unique ability to work across extension program areas enabled her to create Facebook events (~65 events since May) to highlight or market many of the virtual education opportunities planned since the pandemic began.

Together with ISU Extension and Outreach staff and with support of the Advancement team, Leah has developed, co-hosted, and/or moderated eight Did You Know (DYK) Webinars that were broadcast live, so staff could learn in real time and get immediate answers from specialists.

During the early months of the pandemic, Leah anticipated county offices may need additional support to learn and effectively utilize their social media platforms, so she provided virtual hands-on technical support to over 25 county offices. This one-on-one social media support helped staff to familiarize themselves with new ways to reach their community stakeholders.

Leah was also instrumental in:

- updating hashtags/mentions lists
- creating the "managing social media platforms" document
- securing eye-catching images for posts
- assisting with development of a new Image Usage Guideline document

If community members are using the internet to gain access to information, you can be sure they will find Iowa State University Extension and Outreach at the top of the list because of Leah's efforts to showcase who extension is through her social media expertise.

## TEAM: Safe Mushroom Foraging

### Names of Nominees:

- Lina Rodriguez-Salamanca – ANR
- Katelyn Brinkerhoff - Woodbury County
- Carter Oliver - Harrison County
- Julie Hlas - Advancement

**Nominator:** Carter Oliver

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Pre COVID-19 pandemic, Harrison and Woodbury counties were planning to host in-person safe mushroom foraging workshops. The two workshops per county would cover the benefits and risks of mushroom foraging. A mushroom guide would be provided to aid participants in mushroom identification. Workshop dates were selected for early April. Expected attendance was 10 to 20 participants per county.

As COVID-19 restrictions tightened in March, it became apparent that hosting in-person county events was not possible. Planning to convert the in-person program to an online format began in early April, pushing our program date to May 5. The workshop was designed for the two counties but during the promotion and marketing phase, a wider audience showed interest. Registration capacity was quickly reached.

For the online workshops we developed a booklet (available in the Extension Store, PIDC48) and educational curriculum webcasted (summer and fall) covering: 1) mushroom identification, 2) edibility, toxicity, and sensitivity to mushrooms, 3) common edible mushrooms in Iowa, 4) mushroom hunting best practices. The booklet was provided free of charge to individuals that participated in both sessions of the workshop. The webinar reached Iowans including Master Gardeners and mushroom enthusiasts across the state. We reached participants from 15 states and 65 of Iowa's 99 counties.

Participants had an overwhelming positive response to the Safe Mushroom Foraging programs. Our evaluations showed that participants significantly increased their knowledge of safely foraging mushrooms outdoors. We saw a 48% increase of knowledge of risks associated with wild mushrooms. Participants also reported a 52% increase in the knowledge of mushroom seasons. As for the knowledge of the toxicity of mushrooms, we saw an increase of 58% among participants.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach continues its mission in providing timely, researched-based information to Iowans. Adjusting the workshop's presentation style to virtual as the state faced the COVID-19 crisis, county extension staff in Harrison and

Woodbury counties partnered with state plant pathology expert Dr. Lina Rodriguez-Salamanca to deliver the Safe Mushroom Foraging series. There are always risks associated with consuming wild mushrooms. Thanks to this free series and its accompanying guidebook, over 220 Iowans have learned how to safely forage and properly identify edible and non-edible mushrooms as well as how to avoid any potential post-harvest contamination.

Participants provided great feedback, indicating the success of the program.

- “It was very helpful to learn how to visually inspect a morel to know if it was correct or not. This was GREAT! I also learned about the issues of storing in a plastic bag and mixing consumption with alcohol. I also wasn't aware that toxicity could be much longer (days) after eating a mushroom.”
- “I had not realized there were 57 types of mushrooms in Iowa; it really has gotten me more interested in looking through the Safe Mushroom Foraging Guide and seeing what I see out in the forest.”
- “Continued education on safe foraging practices enables Iowans to enjoy our natural areas while providing supplement food sources for their households.”

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## INDIVIDUAL: Jacqueline Comito

**Nominator:** Ann Staudt

Watch the [ignite video](#).

Dr. Jacqueline Comito's creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, and visionary leadership have not only guided the Iowa Learning Farms and Water Rocks! programs to newfound success during COVID-19, but these programs' innovative approaches have literally become the playbook for how to pivot in delivering impactful extension and outreach under the most trying of circumstances.

### Iowa Learning Farms (ILF)

**Virtual Field Days:** When plans for spring field days were halted due to COVID-19, Comito led the ILF team to pool their collective creativity and experience to quickly develop a method for effective online delivery. Between Comito's vision, creativity, perseverance, and technical video production skills, the ILF virtual field day concept went from idea to reality in just a few short weeks. Virtual field days are built upon interweaving short video segments from the field with live commentary and discussion between the virtual meeting host, presenters, and the audience for an engaging hour-long program. ILF has now held 16 virtual field days, reaching 3,540 total attendees (live plus archival). Compared to in-person field days from 2019, ILF's virtual field days

are reaching broader audiences: younger participants (average age 47 vs. 54), more women (38% vs. 23%), and additional agency and extension conservation professionals, certified crop advisors, and technical service providers. Further, Comito literally wrote the playbook for Virtual Field Days, via a [how-to guide](#) on the ILF blog.

**Webinars:** Comito proposed in late March that the ILF conservation webinar series be increased in frequency from monthly to weekly. The weekly format has allowed ILF to highlight a diversity of innovative conservation-focused topics, with presenters and attendees now tuning in from across the country. Since transitioning to the weekly timeline due to COVID-19, ILF has hosted 34 webinars, tallying 5,123 total views (live plus archival).

### **Water Rocks! (WR!)**

Under Comito's leadership and creativity, the WR! team quickly responded to sudden school closures, launching a plethora of new and uniquely engaging youth outreach programs:

**New Video Series (3):** WR! Unplugged, WR! Out of the Box, and Harmony Brook Watershed puppet show video series have reached students learning from home, along with teachers and parents looking for ways to engage students on science and environmental content. These series now include 57 original videos, receiving a combined 93,357 views to date.

**In-Person Outdoor School Presentations:** WR! moved its signature school presentations OUTDOORS for fall 2020, adapting to include face coverings, physical distancing, and a PA system for audio accessibility, reaching 2,190 students at 25 schools statewide.

**Live Streaming Virtual Presentations:** With the changing seasons, outdoor presentations are no longer realistic. WR! Virtual Presentations launched today (11/18), with a full calendar of schools booked through the end of December (currently scheduling for 2021).

I urge you to consider Dr. Comito for the COVID-19 Extension Pivot Award. Comito will be quick to tell you this has been a group effort, but as assistant manager of these programs, let's be real—none of this would have happened without her visionary leadership, resilience, and team empowerment in these uniquely challenging times.

## OVER THE TOP

### Open for Iowa

**Nominator:** Deb Sellers

Watch the [ignite video](#).

The mission of ISU Extension and Outreach is to build a strong Iowa by engaging all Iowans in research, education, and extension experiences to address current and emerging real-life challenges. When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, this system of more than 1,000 employees needed prompt, clear guidance so that staff and participants could navigate the crisis as safely as possible.

In May 2020, ISU Extension and Outreach Leadership selected 13 members for the Open for Iowa Committee based on their expertise or background in public health and medical fields or understanding of the system. The committee was charged with translating and applying COVID-19 guidance to make it useful to ISU Extension and Outreach. The task was urgent, time sensitive, and multi-faceted. The team analyzed guidance from University Human Resources, President Wintersteen, the Iowa Extension Council Association, Governor Reynolds, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the CDC and created guidance documents to assist all extension staff in implementing best practices in their own workplaces.

The initial response of Open for Iowa was rapid and critical. The team rose to the challenge with effective cooperation and collaboration to create swift and high-quality results. Members quickly learned how to work together and play on each member's strengths and expertise. As of November 17, 2020, the committee contributed more than 200 hours to help protect the safety and health of our staff and communities across Iowa. The work continues.

To date, the committee developed 10 different guidance and training documents addressing topics such as face coverings, screening, gatherings, employee-to-supervisor conversations, and guidance for in-person education. The team's guidance repository website has logged more than 2,000 downloads, and their documents have been referenced by others.

As we look forward to a post-pandemic world, ISU Extension and Outreach administration has two priorities to ensure the full implementation of our mission:

1. To ensure the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, participants, and communities, and
2. To facilitate individual success as we work to build a strong Iowa.



ISU Extension and Outreach aims to be there for Iowans now and in the future. The work of Open for Iowa makes it possible for valuable ISU Extension and Outreach education to continue in a safe way during the pandemic.

- Mica Redenius, redenius@iastate.edu, administrative support
- Chris Clark, caclark@iastate.edu, Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Sara Sprouse, sprouse@iastate.edu, Human Sciences
- Abbey Stanek, arpete@iastate.edu, 4-H Youth Development
- Gene Mohling, mohling@iastate.edu, regional director
- Cindy Gannon, cgannon@iastate.edu, Advancement
- Chris Johnsen, johnsen@iastate.edu, Extension Store
- Rob Stevenson, robs@iastate.edu, Human Resources
- Tayler Veldhuizen, taylerv@iastate.edu, Butler County program coordinator
- Rev. Daniel Lamgo, rev.lamgo@gmail.com, Adams County Extension Council
- Julie Baumler, jbaumler@iastate.edu, Iowa Extension Council Association
- Christine Hradek, hradek@iastate.edu, at-large
- Dr. Deb Sellers, dsellers@iastate.edu, extension administration | facilitator

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## Iowa 4-H Virtual/Alternative Fairs Task Force

### Iowa County Fair Partnership

- Mitchell Hoyer (chair) – state 4-H youth program specialist
- Mike Anderson (chair) – state 4-H agri-science program manager
- Emily Ide – former Adair County youth coordinator
- Nichol Kleespies – Buena Vista County youth education coordinator
- Taylor Nelson – former Hancock County program and youth coordinator
- Angela Sperfslage – 4-H youth program specialist
- JD Otterbein – Linn County youth coordinator
- Dr. Christopher Clark – beef field specialist
- Bryan Whaley – director of field operations (north)
- Jacki Luckstead – 4-H youth program specialist
- Jane Hayes-Johnk – 4-H youth program specialist
- Kendra Crooks – 4-H youth program specialist
- Anne Tedore – Regional director
- Amy Brainard – Mahaska County youth coordinator
- Marci Vinsand – Polk County youth coordinator
- Mary Taggs – Shelby County extension educator

**Nominator:** Debbie Nistler

Watch the [ignite video](#).

In spring 2020, Iowa 4-H program specialists assembled a committee of sixteen ISU Extension and Outreach county and regional staff. The committee was formed to provide leadership, recommendations, and viable solutions in the wake of COVID-19 and the potential cancellation of many county fairs and the Iowa State Fair. The committee divided into two groups with one group focused on 4-H static exhibits and the other focused on 4-H livestock shows.

Resources were developed to support continuation of static exhibit judging, including combinations of judging strategies for evaluating youth projects where the youth, exhibit projects, and/or judges could be present (in person) or online (virtually). Examples were created to assist fairs in having youth upload pictures of static projects to be evaluated. Each judging strategy was created to show staff how a safe and quality exhibit judging experience could still be provided, allowing counties to evaluate local conditions and select the best alternative.

Many county fairs still wanted to have in-person livestock shows. The committee developed best practices for “show and go” events and schedule adjustments so animals would arrive, show, and leave all in approximately one day. Alternative options were presented for fairs that wanted livestock judged virtually. Example videos and instructions were developed for county fairs on how exhibitors could submit a consistent and high-quality video of their animal to be uploaded and evaluated by judges. Another issue facing county fairs was the absence of livestock auctions, and the challenge of marketing animals to packers and local lockers. The committee developed sample letters for staff to send to fair premium and auction supporters and businesses asking for their support of ribbon premium auctions instead.

An informational webinar was held May 5 in partnership with the Iowa Association of Fairs and Iowa FFA for county staff, extension councils, and fair board members with over 270 in attendance. Additionally, Dr. Debbie Nistler, state 4-H program leader, held weekly webinars with all Iowa 4-H county staff to answer questions on possible solutions to fair exhibitions.

When the 2020 Iowa State Fair was cancelled, Iowa 4-H staff quickly developed an alternative “Show Iowa” virtual static exhibit, communication exhibit, and State 4-H Awardrobe Clothing Event judging and showcase opportunity for youth. County fairs were still able to select projects and submit photos for evaluation; 2,525 entries from 1,689 4-H members were evaluated by 110 volunteer judges.

Three August weekends in August were dedicated to hosting 4-H and FFA livestock “Special Edition” shows at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Over 1,500 4-H exhibitors with

3,559 animals were exhibited including a record of over 1,200 head for the 4-H swine show.

The virtual/alternative fairs task force did an exemplary job by immediately taking on a challenging situation, providing leadership, and organizing opportunities. With only one county opting not to offer a county fair experience (two cancelled due to COVID-19 outbreaks), youth across Iowa continued to have an opportunity to showcase their project work and have a safe and positive experience during a most challenging year.

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

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