Online Continuing Education Available for Early Childhood Professionals

The quality of care that children receive between birth and age five sets the stage for the rest of their lives. With that in mind, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach offers professional development for child care providers.

Participation in professional development is an important part of providing quality care and education. Research indicates a strong correlation between formal education and training of providers and quality early care and education for children. Iowa Department of Human Services regulations provide minimum standards for continuing education. Many Iowa initiatives encourage child care professionals to exceed the minimum professional development expectations.

“Early childhood professionals often work long hours and lead busy personal lives. By providing online courses, we give a convenient option to grow knowledge, expand skills and meet Iowa licensing requirements,” says Cindy Thompson, a human sciences specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach.

The ISU Extension and Outreach team of human sciences subject matter experts offers online courses on a vast array of subjects including dealing with stress, STEM, literacy, and guidance. Most courses are available to any early childhood professional, but some are specific to home providers, center staff and administrators.

“We continually receive positive feedback from participants that our online courses are engaging and allow providers to save on travel expenses and have dinner with their families,” said Thompson, who specializes in family life issues.

Some courses are eligible for National Administrator Credential (NAC) credit as well as Continuing Education Units (CEUs). All courses are eligible for DHS credit, just like attending a face-to-face class. Through the use of polls, chat boxes and small group discussions, participants interact with peers as if they were meeting together in the same room.

“And they are -- it just happens to be a virtual room,” Thompson said.

“One of our biggest partners in this work is Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral consultants. They have the direct relationship with home child care and center staff and can provide child care staff and directors guidance in
how best to meet professional development goals. They also make suggestions to the ISU Extension and Outreach team for needed topics,” Thompson said.

To see a listing of all current online options for early childhood professionals offered by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, visit www.extension.iastate.edu/humanosciences/el-online.

Iowa early childhood professionals with questions or suggestions related to the Early Learning Online options may contact Cindy Thompson at cpthom08@iastate.edu.

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Contact: Teresa Wiemerslage, Food Systems Coordinator, wiemer@iastate.edu, 563-794-0599

**Iowa Food Hub Connects Schools to Local Farmers**

School districts throughout eastern Iowa purchased over $65,000 in food from local farms in the 2016-17 school year with help from the Iowa Food Hub.

The finding is part of the annual food system evaluation report conducted by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach on behalf of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI).

The data includes schools from Allamakee, Bremer, Chickasaw, Clayton, Dubuque, Howard, Fayette, Linn and Winneshiek counties. Schools purchase local fruits and vegetables, beef, pork, turkey, yogurt and milk from the hub.

K-12 schools have purchased over $234,000 from the Iowa Food Hub since 2013.

“The food hub has been the key to success in growing local food purchases by schools,” said Teresa Wiemerslage, food system coordinator for the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Local Foods Team.

“In northeast Iowa, school purchases had plateaued at $20,000 per year. Once the food hub started weekly deliveries, the schools embraced the convenience,” said Wiemerslage.

Farm to school is a priority for the Iowa Food Hub. This relationship was amplified by a USDA Farm to School grant in 2013. Funds helped the food hub add staff to assist schools with procurement and menu planning, create weekly delivery routes to schools and investigate costs for minimally-processed food items for schools.

FFI is specifically interested in the schools in the six-county corner of the state, but Iowa Food Hub serves a larger radius and has started connecting with more schools around Dubuque, Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. One-third of the school purchases in 2016-17 came from districts outside of the FFI-focus area.

The food hub is able to accommodate special requests from schools, like Iowa sweet corn or local beef grilled by the cattlemen groups. In one case, the food hub found Viking apples to serve at Decorah during homecoming week.

“Not only have the schools sourced high quality products for local school children, but they have also invested in the farmers that support our towns and schools,” said Wiemerslage.

When schools purchase local foods, their purchases trigger even more local economic activity. Several studies estimate that buying local food has a multiplier effect of 1.4-2.6 throughout the local economy; for every dollar spent locally, another 40 cents to $1.60 of economic activity is generated.

The Iowa Food Hub (IFH) is a local food distribution business that connects farmers and food buyers within a 150 mile radius of West Union, Iowa.

Hosted by a non-profit organization, the food hub was established to facilitate development of the regional food system. Their programming focuses on food access and equality, small and medium-sized farm viability, beginning farmers, local economic development, and food system research and education. Learn more at www.iowafoodhub.com.
Contact: Larry Tranel, ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Specialist NE/SE Iowa, 563-583-6496 or tranel@iastate.edu

Tri-State Ag Lender’s Seminar

The 31st Annual Tri-State Agriculture Lender’s Seminar will be held on Thursday, October 26 at the Best Western Plus Hotel in Dubuque, Iowa from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. This year’s focus is on market outlooks for livestock, grains and dairy along with the issues of dairy finances, land prices and farm economy issues.

“Price risk management continues to be the major variable for profitability in many commodity enterprises. Understanding the market and risk is a necessary part of farm management assistance for agricultural lenders as well”, says Larry Tranel, ISU Extension Dairy Field Specialist. “This seminar has proven itself in assisting lenders and farm financial advisors in helping farmers manage that risk.”

The cost of the program is $100 per person by October 17. To register, contact Larry Tranel at ISU Extension in Dubuque County at 563-583-6496 or e-mail tranel@iastate.edu for registration information.

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Contact: Jesse Randall, ISU Associate Professor & Extension Forester, 515-294-1168, randallj@iastate.edu

An Array of Topics at this Year’s Yellow River State Forestry Field Day

Visit with Iowa DNR forestry professionals and ISU Extension Forestry Specialists at the Yellow River State Forest on October 5.

During the first general session, Bats: understanding the decline in populations, why management actions are taken and how this impacts work in the woods. Later in the morning, we will have three concurrent rotating sessions: Tree ID from leaves, seeds and bark; Ask a Forester; forest health and new technology.

During a catered lunch, we will have an update on the Chronic Wasting Disease in the deer herd, followed by updates on changes surrounding the Forestry Bureau. We will end the day with two concurrent rotating sessions: reviewing a new 16 acre tree planting with a broad range of species (topics to be covered include species selection, layout design, planting options, herbicide, follow-up treatments); overview of a 1 year old wetland complex restoration, this is an update from last year’s clean out phase. If time allows we will cover bark peeling a dying ash to look for Emerald Ash Boer.

Registrations will begin at 8:30 A.M. The program will begin at 9:00 A.M. at the Yellow River State Forest Headquarters complex, 729 State Forest Road (County HWY B25); 5 miles SE of Rossville on Hwy 76 to B25; 4 miles NE on B25 to the Headquarters. Look for forestry field day signs at the entrance to the headquarters.

The cost for the day, which includes morning refreshments and a hot lunch, is $15 payable on the day of the event. You must RSVP to Allamakee County Extension 563-568-6345 or email juliechr@iastate.edu by October 2 to guarantee your meal! If you leave a message, please provide your name and phone number. Registrants eat first! Participants should dress for outdoor conditions.

Additional upcoming forestry events include Iowa’s Tree Farmer of the Year Field Day in Epworth, on September 28. Bremer County Forestry Field Day near Tripoli, on October 26. For more information and a full agenda on any of these events visit www.forestry.iastate.edu.

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