

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Success Story

Title

Ag Education Top Priority For Garrington

Author:

Author's Location

CoReporter(s) - ISUEO Staff

- Schultz, Madeline M [VAA]
- Scarbrough, Lisa F [VAA]
- Garrington, Cortney R [CO PD]
- Nelson, Andrea R [COOP]

Relevance

ISU Extension and Outreach Warren County serves a population of 46,225 people (US Census Bureau, 2017). There are 1,334 farms with annual agricultural sales of more than \$110 Million in Warren County (USDA NASS Census of Ag 2012).

Response

Since August 2015, Cortney Garrington has been a dynamo of innovation and responsiveness as the Executive Director of ISU Extension and Outreach in Warren County. An Osceola County 4Her, graduate of Iowa State University, and former high school agricultural teacher; Cortney now brings the research and resources of the university to those who live and work in Warren County.

Cathy Ayers, local farmer and former Warren County staff member, remembers the day Cortney was selected as the Executive Director, "With Cortney at the lead, I knew that the citizens of Warren County would have numerous and wide varieties of program opportunities. She hasn't disappointed and times are exciting. Extension has programs throughout the county and just a few of the people being served are youth, women in ag, gardeners, and chemical applicators."

Cortney enjoys working with the Warren County Extension Council members whose goals are to see communities and farmers thrive, and to see families and children be healthy. The council challenges Cortney to spend half her time on education and half her time on administration.

"From the start, agricultural and natural resource education has been a top priority for Cortney," shares Amy Tlach, Warren County Extension Council Chair. "Cortney is continually seeking out opportunities to meet the needs at the county level for all types of agricultural education, environmental programs and land stewardship. She has conducted surveys of county residents regarding programming needs, built partnerships with ag business and education leaders, called on the expertise of ISU Extension and Outreach field staff when needed, partnered with other counties for regional events to reach larger audiences and continues to expand her own knowledge about new ag topics as they surface every day," explains Amy.

Cortney really appreciates the innovative and interesting ideas the council comes up with. "They asked if we could do a workshop about different cuts of meat. So, I collaborated with Mary Krisco, ISU Extension and Outreach Human Sciences Specialist - Nutrition and Wellness, to do a workshop talking about beef's nutritional value, where the different cuts come from, and how to cook those cuts," recalls Cortney. She continues, "It's a bit of a song and dance going back and forth on what they want and finding the resources, but we keep our classroom busy." Cortney partners with Mary frequently and uses her education background to help teach nutrition, slow cooker workshops, how to give economical gifts from the kitchen.

Some of the ag programs Courtney brought to Warren County and Region 13, include Women Marketing Grain, Start to Farm: New & Beginning Farmer Series, Annie's Project, Master Gardeners, Women Land and Legacy leadership and a variety of youth activities. "The most notable part of all of these things is that Cortney carries with her a great attitude, willingness to learn new things and continually serves Warren County with a smile and an 'I can do that!' way of thinking," shares Amy.

Kathryn Pierson, ISU Extension and Outreach Warren County Office Manager, helped the Natural Resource Conservation Service with Women Land and Legacy (WLL) programs a couple of times a year. When Cortney came on board, she provided leadership to help expand the program. Now, 30 to 40 women attend events six times a year. "I am a women in

ag and I want all women in ag to have the opportunity to educate themselves,” explains Cortney, “I jumped right in because land stewardship is a personal interest of mine.” Partnering within the region makes sense to Cortney. She calls on the skills of Brooke Blessington, ISU Extension and Outreach Madison County Executive Director, to take on beef and pasture programs for both counties while she takes a lead on horticulture and row crop programs. She often counts on Aleta Cochran, ISU Extension and Outreach Dallas County Youth Coordinator, for help with women in ag programs within the region. Cortney cross-promotes and directs Extension clientele to the many specialized programs ISU Extension and Outreach Polk County can offer due to their higher population base. She is also working closely with Joe Hannan, ISU Extension and Outreach Horticulture Specialist, on teaching some lessons for the regional Start to Farm series. “I think it’s important to work smarter not harder,” she explains.

“Cortney and the Warren County Extension Council are very committed to providing local and regional agriculture programming,” shares Andrea Nelson, ISU Extension and Outreach Region 13 Director. “At the Warren County Extension and Outreach 100 year celebration in June 2017, they had Master Gardeners, the Conservation Station trailer, and the farm management specialist available for more than 350 visitors. The Warren County Extension Council provided funding support for WaterRocks! and Cortney secured campus and field specialists to train fruit and vegetable growers on how to meet new USDA regulations for food safety,” Andrea says.

Cortney serves as the ISU Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Central Iowa Ag Team Leader. Already in her young career, she contributes to the professional excellence of her colleagues by organizing important team learning and networking opportunities.

She has an exceptional ability to collaborate with ANR program specialists to meet client needs. She worked closely with Steve Johnson, ISU Extension and Outreach Farm and Agribusiness Management Specialist, to bring Annie’s Project to the region in 2016. Women found Annie’s Project to be useful and asked for more. Cortney then worked with Joe Sellers, ISU Extension and Outreach Beef Specialist, and Charles Brown, ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management Specialist, to provide the Women Managing Cattle course in 2017. Next she collaborated with Steve Johnson to offer the Women Marketing Grain course in 2018.

Staying in touch with almost all of the women in these three courses helps Cortney see the impacts Extension programs are having on the women and their families. “I work for Extension because I want to make a difference in people’s lives,” shares Cortney, “with the women in ag programs I feel this the most.”

Type of Change(s)(s)

- Learning Changes
- Behavior Changes
- Condition Changes

Impact Statement

“As someone that has greatly benefited from Cortney’s contributions to Warren County Extension programming, most specifically the Women in Ag programming, I can confidently say she makes a big impact” states Mekenze Cortum, Warren County farmer and insurance sales development analyst. She adds, “I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to grow, develop and learn both personally and professionally from Cortney and the programs which she tirelessly works to champion! She constantly and selflessly gives to ensure the needs of clients are met. In my eyes, that is one of the many traits that she possesses that make her so great at what she does. I often admire and am inspired by her innovative, sky-the-limit, dream-it, do-it way of thinking. She’s not afraid to face or confront challenges and roadblocks to overcome them when necessary for progress or purpose and I so appreciate this about her.”

Mekenze muses that it’s hard to be brief when talking about Cortney. “I can also easily vouch for Cortney’s outstanding teamwork and collaboration as I’ve had the opportunity to partner with her to help plan and coordinate Warren County Women in Ag events. Her approach provides an excellent example of what teamwork and collaboration should be. Without hesitation, I’ll always be a willing member of any team of Cortney’s as a result of the way she contributes. In summary, Cortney truly makes a difference by who she is and what she does or accomplishes. She’s one of those people who impacts all those whose path she crosses. She has a great deal to be proud of!”

ISUEO Signature Issues

Food & the Environment --> Farm Business Management

Outcomes

Women Managing Cattle is an example of Cortney's impactful programs. She is proud of Mekenze Cortum who bought her first cows, and Robin Gruebel who expanded her herd, after taking the Women Managing Cattle course. In a follow-up survey of Women Managing Cattle participants from across the state, 69 percent of the 36 respondents (including six from Warren County) indicated they make financial and marketing decisions for the herd ‘always’ or ‘most of the time.’ Survey results indicated that as a result of taking the course, 52 percent of respondents calculated their profits on a per head unit at the end of the year; 52 percent of respondents chose land use and conservation systems; and 45 percent of respondents rotated their herd among pastures based on forage growth. There were 82 percent of survey respondents who told us the course helped them improve their beef cattle business and 56 percent who said it helped improve profitability. There were 96 percent of survey respondents who told us the course helped them find support and friendship in their community.

Location / Participant(s) Came From

- County
 - Warren

Partner(s)

- County Extension Staff