

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Extension and Outreach

### **Success Story**

#### **Title**

Women In Ag -- Annie's Project: Developing Capacity And Impact In Northeast Iowa

**Author:** Melissa O'Rourke

#### **Author's Location**

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#### **Relevance**

While the US Census of Agriculture has historically asked some questions about women in agriculture, the upcoming Census will ask more specific questions about the involvement in management and decision-making by women in the farm operation. In anticipation of this development, the 2017 Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll incorporated questions about women's involvement in farm business decisions. This research revealed that women participate in farm record keeping and/ or financial management and estate planning or succession planning at substantially higher rates than men; and noting that, "In the realm of estate or succession planning women clearly predominated" in decision-making activities. Women in agriculture need more opportunities to learn and take action in farm management activities, including record keeping, financial management, and estate or succession planning. Annie's Project farm management program can provide these opportunities for women.

#### **Response**

During 2016, Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist Melissa O'Rourke became aware that no county-based ISU Extension employees in Northeast Iowa had participated in training or professional development opportunities related to programming for women in agriculture, despite the fact that these opportunities were available. O'Rourke encouraged county staff to take advantage of these events -- and county staff from Allamakee, Fayette, Clayton, Chickasaw and Delaware counties traveled to Ames to participate in such professional development. Having trained county staff in the region enabled O'Rourke to more effectively offer Annie's Project farm management education programs in Northeast Iowa. These county staff had learned methodology and best practices for women in ag programming (to include Annie's Project) and were better able to partner with O'Rourke to engage in planning (to include program Steering Committees), publicity, recruitment, and educational practices. During 2017, two (2) Annie's Projects were offered in Northeast Iowa (at locations in Allamakee and Fayette counties). A total of fifty-two (52) women from multiple counties enrolled and successfully completed the six-week, 18-hour educational programs.

### **Type of Change(s)**

- Learning Changes
- Behavior Changes
- Condition Changes

### **Impact Statement**

By encouraging and motivating county staff to participate in professional development, the capacity to offer programming for women in agriculture in Northeast Iowa saw significant growth. In the 2017 programming alone, fifty-two (52) farm business operations representing thousands of acres and livestock were impacted. When these farm women are empowered by participation in Annie's Project, they can take on more substantial contributions to their farm operations and take on more influential roles in their family farms and in their communities.

### **ISUEO Signature Issues**

Food & the Environment --> Farm Business Management

### **Outcomes**

Participants complete pre- and post-program surveys to record their change in knowledge and action. Research consistently shows that Annie's Project courses are successful in extending knowledge in the five agricultural risk areas (finance, human resources, legal, marketing and production). Results indicate a statistically significant difference in the overall mean knowledge gains as a result of the course. Participants also respond that the methodologies and best education practices implemented in the Annie's Project programs make it more likely that they would take important actions toward managing the agricultural risks in their farm operations.

### **Location / Participant(s) Came From**

- County
  - Allamakee
  - Bremer
  - Chickasaw
  - Clayton
  - Delaware
  - Fayette
  - Howard
  - Winneshiek

### **Partner(s)**

- County Extension Staff  
Madeline Schultz, Women In Ag Program Manager