

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Success Story

Title

Brown Extends Knowledge To Help Women In Agriculture Succeed

Author: Madeline Schultz

Author's Location

1230 NATL SWINE
AMES IA
50011-3310

CoReporter(s) - ISUEO Staff

- Brown, Charles R [EXTAG]

CoReporter(s) - Non ISUEO Staff

- Carpenter, Cora [ISU Studen]

Relevance

Women have significant employment, management and ownership on family farms and agribusinesses in Iowa. The 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture reported 49,085 women farm operators in Iowa, representing 33 percent of all farm operators. Of these farm women 59 percent had part-time or full-time off farm careers. Women were 53.1 percent of the undergraduates enrolled in the Iowa State University (ISU) College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 2018/19, indicating a strong interest in agricultural careers. Women make influential decisions that contribute to economic vitality and agricultural sustainability in Iowa.

Response

As a member of the Farm Management Team, Charles has taught several different multi-session local courses for women in agriculture including one Annie's Project farm business management course, two Managing for Today and Tomorrow farm transitioning courses, and three each of the Women Managing Cattle and Women Marketing Grain courses since he began working for Extension in 2015. The courses were taught in six different Southeast counties reaching 131 women. Charles created an impact on their agricultural businesses and interests.

The courses are designed to help reach and educate women of all experience levels, ages and agricultural industry involvement. Charles feels there are not enough women involved in agriculture from a management standpoint and that it is important to reach out to the audience of women. Charles stated, "Many young women are wanting to or are taking over operations and there are older women who are wanting to learn more on transition planning. By teaching women in ag classes, my main goal is to provide women with knowledge or enhance their understanding on topics they are interested in within the agriculture field."

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Charles leaves a positive impact on women and their farm businesses as a result of his programming. A large part of the success of class participants comes from the follow-up that participants have with Charles. He feels women come in to the Extension office, email or telephone him, with specific questions as it directly relates to their farm business. By providing participants with specific information, they will be more able to take what they learned during the classes and apply the concepts personally.

Lorraine Hoffman is a co-owner of a small niche swine breeding business and is a past participant of Brown's Managing for Today and Tomorrow course. When asked about her experiences, she stated; "Charles Brown is an amazing amalgam of knowledge, experience, common sense, and selfless giving to others. One of those who will leave a legacy, not only of his own achievements, but more importantly what he has done for others to make their lives better." Hoffman also stated, "Charles has a passion for extension services, and I felt as though he took a personal interest in each of us enrolled in the class."

For Charles, he feels that women involved in agriculture have not been well served in the past, and women in ag programming is a great way to target this audience. He stated the women only classes create a more comfortable environment for participants and they are willing to ask more questions. He continues to be surprised by how often women want to share their stories and experiences with each other. Being able to be open with each other adds value to the conversations during the courses. Traci Vantigar participated a Women Marketing Grain course led by Charles. She is the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Henry County Office Assistant and had no grain marketing experience before taking the class. After the course, she now feels like she can have a conversation with her fiancé and actually understand the terminology. When Charles was asked what his favorite part of women's programming is, he responded, "Helping individuals, women and farmers succeed in their own businesses."

Results(s)

Impact Statement

Women in the farm management courses connected with others and enjoyed a positive learning experience they carry into their everyday lives. They were able to gain a broader understanding of farm finances, transition planning, grain marketing, and other risk management topics.

When women are empowered, they can contribute to a more sustainable Iowa by improving economic resiliency, conserving natural resources, and supporting one another as a community of women in agriculture. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach educators like Charles Brown have an important role in providing effective and efficient farm management education for women in Iowa. By improving agricultural sustainability, women in the industry are key stakeholders in the production of safe, plentiful and accessible food.

ISUEO Signature Issues

Food & the Environment --> Farm Business Management

Location / Participant(s) Came From

- County
 - Henry
 - Jefferson
 - Mahaska

Partner(s)

- Business and Industry
- County Extension Staff