2022 WOMEN in AG
Leadership Conference

November 29-30, 2022 • Iowa State University
Gateway Hotel and Conference Center • 2100 Green Hills Dr • Ames, IA
Together We Lead

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Welcome

Dear Women in Ag:

Welcome to the 2022 Women in Ag Leadership Conference. The theme is Together We Lead. This year’s event is focused on supporting one another and encouraging you to lead beyond what you thought was possible.

On Tuesday, we’re excited to bring you surprising campus tours and a fun energizing session with Laila Down. The intensive workshops will foster collective wisdom and help you meet other women with shared interests. Join us for the networking dinner and make new friends.

On Wednesday, we are thrilled to bring you our keynote speaker, Amy Cronin, who raises hogs, poultry, and crops with her family in Ontario, Iowa, and Missouri. Our capstone speaker, Cleophus Franklin Jr., founded Morningside University’s Franklin Leadership Foundation, and serves on the Annie’s Project national board of directors. These are just two of the many inspiring role models who agreed to be part of this conference because they are passionate about supporting women’s leadership in the agricultural industry.

A speaker from last year commented this conference has a casual and friendly feel. We sure hope you’ll take this cue to approach our speakers and visit with them. They all have amazing experiences to share and are focused on giving you actionable leadership steps you can implement to improve your life, career, and farm business, agribusiness, or organization.

We are pleased to announce the 2022 Women Impacting Ag Honorees: Laura Cunningham, Susan Kuennen, Bridget Mahoney, and Tara Neal. Enjoy their incredible stories and seek them out throughout the day.

This conference is designed around three key goals. We hope you’ll take home and carry with you: a belief in yourself and the power of life-long learning, connections with other women who inspire your leadership journey, and new skills that enhance your leadership.

Thank you to our advisory committee members, speakers, sponsors, attendees, and everyone who is contributing to this extraordinary event. An anonymous quote reads, “A farmer does not grow crops. A farmer creates an environment where crops can grow.” Similarly, we do not grow leaders in agriculture, but we hope we’ve created a conference where all of you can grow, so that Together We Lead.

Sincerely,

Madeline Schultz and Krista Downing, Conference Co-Chairs

Together We Lead
Tuesday Agenda

12:00 p.m. Onsite check-in Begins
Networking and refreshments

1:00 p.m. Concurrent Session A: Iowa State University Campus Tours

- Tour A1: Student Innovation Center with Media Experience
  Rachel Faircloth and Danielle Orris
- Tour A2: Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering
  Lindsey Hartfield and Michelle Soupir
- Tour A3: Feed Mill, Poultry and Turkey Farms
  Ben Drescher, Jessica Menke, and Tanner Volkmann
- Tour A4: Steam Tunnels and CALS History Walk
  Mike Murray and Nicholas Scott
- Tour A5: ISU Equine Program, Horses and Barns
  Peggy Auwerda and Nikki Ferwerda

Refreshment Break

3:15 p.m. General Session One

- Opening Remarks - Kiley Allan and Lisa Scarbrough
- Leading with Grace and Growth - Laila Hajji Down

Refreshment Break

4:30 p.m. Concurrent Session B: Intensive Workshops

- Session B1: Leave a Legacy through Leasing, Conservation and Succession
  Catherine DeLong, Melissa O’Rourke, Jingyi Tong, and Kitt Tovar Jensen
- Session B2: Discover Your Leadership Strengths
  Lora Leigh Chrystal and Jennifer Leptien
- Session B3: You’re Not Alone: Fields of Wisdom Abound Through Mentoring
  Gayle Coon and Keli Tallman with guests Jamie Benning, Erin Cumings, and Denise Schwab
- Session B4: Some Straight Talk About Farm Financial Statements
  Nancy Brannaman and Leslie Miller

6:30 p.m. Networking Dinner
Committee Welcome - Alexandra Osborne and Janette Smith
Networking Activities - Krista Downing and Rylee Sloss

8:00 p.m. Program Concludes
Wednesday Agenda

7:30 a.m.  Onsite Check-in Begins
Networking and refreshments

8:30 a.m.  General Session Two
• Opening Remarks - Krista Downing and Madeline Schultz
• University Welcome - John Lawrence
• Keynote: Changing the World One Step at a Time - Amy Cronin
• Women Impacting Ag Recognition - Marilee Jones, Monica Lursen, and Lisa Scarbrough

Refreshment Break

10:45 a.m.  Concurrent Session C
• Session C1: Managing Your Cyber Ecosystem
  Doug Jacobson and Megan Wheelock
• Session C2: Digging Deep so We can Travel Far
  Amy Cronin
  Patricia Dyar
• Session C4: Panel: The New Rules of Remote Work
  Melissa O’Rourke (Moderator), Andrea Arias, Nancy Brannaman, and Karen Grote

12:00 p.m.  Networking Lunch
• Committee Welcome - Alexis Stevens and Jingyi Tong
• Networking Activities - Sylvia Brown and Ann Johanns

1:00 p.m.  Concurrent Session D
• Session D1: Agricultural Carbon Markets
  Alejandro Plastina and Alexis Stevens
• Session D2: Incorporating Chaos Theory into Your Strategy
  Lisa Shimkat
• Session D3: Ignite Your Spark: Activating Your Leadership Style
  Magan Lewis
• Session D4: Five Unconventional Tips that Make Health Simple
  Alexa Schirm

Refreshment Break

2:15 p.m.  General Session Three
• Panel: Insights on Board Leadership - Ann Wolf, Michelle Book, and Susan Tronchetti
• Capstone: Partnering with Purpose: Building Meaningful Partnerships That Win!
  Cleophus Franklin Jr.
• Closing Remarks - Sara Lira and Madeline Schultz

4:00 p.m.  Program Concludes
Tuesday Session Descriptions

Concurrent Session A: Tours

Tour A1: Student Innovation Center with Media Experience: Hosted by Rachel Faircloth, Event Coordinator, and Danielle Orris, Manager of Media Production: Create your own agricultural public service announcement in the digital media Makerspace at the Student Innovation Center on campus. The center is open to all Iowa State students to collaborate, create, and innovate. The building includes dedicated spaces for each college, classrooms, study rooms, and makerspaces. The Student Innovation Center is the nexus on campus where all Cyclones are invited to innovate through experimentation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the free exchange of ideas.

Tour A2: Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering: Hosted by Lindsey Hartfiel, Graduate Student and Michelle Soupir, Interim AssociateDean: Experience the river model, bio reactor models, and other conservation, research, and demonstration spaces in the Department of Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering. Meet women in the department who are influencing the vision to offer world premier service to society through innovative engineering and technology to sustainably advance agriculture, industry, and living systems. You’ll also visit the water analysis lab and learn about the department’s artwork inspired by Iowa’s natural landscapes.

Tour A3: Feed Mill, Poultry, and Turkey Farms: Hosted by Anthony Ewing, Feed Mill Manager Ben Drescher, Animal Science Farms Director, Jessica Menke, Poultry Farm Manager, and Tanner Volkmann, Turkey Farm Manager: The Kent Corporation Feed Mill and Grain Science Complex is entering the final stages of construction. The state-of-the-art facility will focus on furthering the university’s mission of teaching, research, service and extension. The Robert T. Hamilton Poultry Teaching and Research Farm includes a welcome center featuring one-way viewing glass where visitors can see first-hand examples of Iowa egg production systems. The Stanley L. Balloun Turkey Teaching and Research Facility was opened in the spring of 2022, becoming the only facility of its kind focused on turkey production at a major university. The facility provides students with state-of-the-art equipment for research that addresses current challenges and helps advance Iowa’s turkey industry.

Tour A4: Steam Tunnels and CALS History Walk: Hosted by Mike Murray, Director of Engineering for Utilities Distribution, and Nicholas Scott, Museum Security and Education Program Assistant: Did you know there is a sprawling network of subterranean tunnels built to house pipes that deliver high-pressure steam to campus buildings? The tunnels expanded as the campus grew, protecting pipes that take steam from the power plant to buildings, primarily for heat and hot water. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Art and History Walk will take you through Curtiss Hall, Agronomy Hall Courtyard and other agricultural buildings. You’ll learn about artworks such as ‘Do You Know What’s Inside this Flower’ and the ‘Janus Agri Altar.’

Tour A5: Equine Program, Horses, and Barns: Hosted by Peggy Auwerda, Associate Professor and Extension and Outreach Equine Specialist, and Nikki Ferwerda, Associate Teaching Professor and Equine Farms Manager: Come see the award-winning herd of Quarter Horse and Thoroughbred broodmares housed in the historic barns on campus as well as the newer Equine Learning Center constructed south of campus in 2014. Up to 15 students work at the horse barns which house as many as 80 horses. Learn about the experiences students gain through the farms and the 10 undergraduate and graduate courses in equine science offered by the Department of Animal Science.
Tuesday Session Descriptions

General Session One

Leading with Grace and Growth: Presented by Laila Hajji Down: We can all afford to walk in more grace. Leading with grace and in the spirit of growth will lead to more transformation in us as leaders and in those that follow us. But how exactly do we do that? What does it look like in practice? Join former National FFA Officer, Ag Sales Rep, and professional speaker Laila Hajji Down, as she shares an engaging, energizing, and thought-provoking session on how we lead with grace and enable growth in ourselves and others. Come ready to laugh, think, grow, and, most importantly, walk away with tangible strategies to improve how you lead yourself and others.

Concurrent Session B: Intensive Workshops

Session B1: Leave a Legacy through Leasing, Conservation and Succession: Presented by Catherine DeLong, Melissa O’Rourke, Jingyi Tong, and Kitt Tovar Jensen: As a farmland owner or manager, the decisions you make greatly influence the future of agriculture in Iowa. We’ll share insights gained from the 358 responses to our farmland ownership and management survey. The team will offer information and resources to help women meet the challenges expressed in the survey. You’ll learn how to improve lease arrangements, implement new conservation practices, and prepare the next generation to succeed in agriculture. Bring your questions, discuss your concerns and accomplishments with other women, and leave this workshop with a renewed commitment to a lasting legacy of equitable land access, healthy landscapes, and generational transition.

Session B2: Discover Your Leadership Strengths: Presented by Lora Leigh Chrystal and Jennifer Leptien: Presenters will help participants recognize their innate leadership talents and provide tools to develop those talents into strengths. Whether you are taking charge in an agribusiness, in the dairy barn, or around your farm family’s kitchen table, you can use your own personal leadership strengths to improve your communication skills, understand group dynamics and lead authentically. Attendees will use their completed CliftonStrengths™ online assessment during the workshop.

Session B3: You’re Not Alone: Fields of Wisdom Abound Through Mentoring: Presented by Gayle Coon and Keli Tallman with guests Jamie Benning, Erin Cumings, and Denise Schwab: Have you ever felt like you are alone trying to navigate the abundant career fields in Iowa’s agricultural landscape? Participants will engage in a supportive space that both encourages mentees and honors and fosters the collective wisdom of seasoned agricultural professionals. Through guided small group activities and discussions, participants will learn how to seek and offer career advice and promote the benefits of mentoring relationships and strategies.

Session B4: Some Straight Talk About Farm Financial Statements: Presented by Nancy Brannaman and Leslie Miller: Increasingly, lenders are using the information from farm financial statements to determine risk and set interest rates on customers’ farming operations. The only sure way for you to know if they have the best and most accurate information is to understand how that information is put together. This workshop will help you understand your numbers and use them to advocate for your farming operation. In addition, you will learn financial benchmarks that tell you how your operation compares to your competition.
Wednesday Session Descriptions

General Session Two

**Keynote: Changing the World One Step at a Time: Presented by Amy Cronin:** When we think about leadership, it can be daunting, overwhelming and exciting all at the same time. Amy Cronin is a passionate leader, agricultural advocate, farmer, mother of six, government appointee and business owner. She can relate to the idea of walking the tightrope and yet, has embraced the juggle of life with a determination to make the world a better place for the next generation. Her leadership journey has been one that embraces continuous learning, collaboration, and doing hard things. Join Amy as she shares ten lessons she lives by through stories of joy, struggle, passion, and perseverance.

**Women Impacting Agriculture Recognition: Presented by Marilee Jones, Monica Lursen, and Lisa Scarbrough**
We are excited to honor four amazing women who are who are making positive changes and creating a more sustainable Iowa by improving economic resiliency and stability; conserving natural resources; and being influential agricultural leaders, family members, and community leaders. We’ll highlight their accomplishments through pictures and videos. Each honoree will share her story, goals, and encouragement for other women in agriculture.

Concurrent Session C

**Session C1: Managing Your Cyber Ecosystem: Presented by Doug Jacobson and Megan Wheelock:** With increased reliance on sharing personal data through a variety of online platforms, farm and agricultural business managers are asking how their data is being protected by other businesses and how they can secure their own data. Learn practical steps and best practices you can apply today to prepare for cybersecurity threats. You’ll increase your cybersecurity literacy and gain skills to proactively manage your cyber ecosystem to reduce the risk of economic losses. Yes, you can reduce the risk of production disruptions, lost or mismanaged decision-making data, identity theft, malware attacks, and physical system failures.

**Session C2: Digging Deep So We Can Travel Far: Presented by Amy Cronin:** Have you ever taken the time to stop and really think about who you are, what you want, and how you are going to get there? We all have dreams and aspirations to be better, climb the ladder, or experience life to the fullest. Each day we are faced with many problems to solve and we often make decisions in isolation. Join Amy as she journeys with you through an interactive session, challenging you to really dig deep in order to discover what you stand for and what matters most to you. You’ll learn by aligning your core values with your decision-making process, it can lead to deeper happiness, greater fulfillment, and ultimately, help you achieve your dreams.

**Session C3: What Makes a Leader? Lessons Rooted in Farming for Generations: Presented by Patricia Dyar:**
So, you want to be a leader. Or maybe you don’t think you are a leader. During this session you will learn attributes of a leader and the importance of having a personal board of directors. Patricia will share her career journey from a small, 120-acre dairy farm in northeast Iowa to a role early in her career working for Farm Credit Services during the farm crisis in the 1980s, as well as several executive roles at John Deere Financial, both domestically and internationally. You will walk away from this interactive session with three implementable actions to reinforce your leadership skills and goals.

**Session C4: Panel: The New Rules of Remote Work: Presented by Melissa O’Rourke (Moderator), Andrea Arias, Nancy Brannaman, and Karen Grote:**
The pandemic expanded a trend towards more remote work. Now, women in agriculture are finding new opportunities for remote work and figuring out how to succeed in the post-pandemic environment. In this session, you’ll learn from professionals with lots of remote work experience both prior to and after the pandemic. You’ll discover how to lead a team remotely, deal with internet issues in rural areas, maintain visibility to colleagues, and plan your work at home to prevent distractions. Bring your own questions and wisdom to this session and connect with others to make working remotely a better experience for everyone.
Wednesday Session Descriptions

Concurrent Session D

Session D1: Agricultural Carbon Markets: Presented by Alejandro Plastina and Alexis Stevens: The carbon market presents many challenges including aspects of the measuring, reporting and verifying (MRV) systems, and understanding contractual agreements. Join us to learn what a carbon credit is, how one is created, and the state of carbon markets today. We’ll dive into the science of carbon sequestration and discuss potentially qualifying farming practices. Learn about the value and risks of carbon credit markets to farmers and the considerations for those thinking of entering into carbon market opportunities.

Session D2: Incorporating Chaos Theory into Your Strategy: Presented by Lisa Shimkat: Chaos is a normal part of our world! One way to define Chaos Theory outside the scientific world is that it is the impact of surprises. If you are running a farm business, agribusiness, or other organization, you are trying to manage surprises and expect the unexpected. Defining and strengthening your strategy can help make you a better businessperson. Learn how strategic planning has changed and how it is just as important to plan your exit as it is to plan the start.

Session D3: Ignite Your Spark: Activating Your Leadership Styles: Presented by Magan Lewis: Time is one of our most valuable resources, so we need to be wise investors. Start leading by example and invest in activities that not only bring value to your organization, but value to YOU. You are in the driver’s seat. Focus on the construction zones that continually polish your big rocks and spend less time taking those detours that end up being a distraction. Different situations call for diverse leadership approaches, be ready to pivot and step outside your comfort zone. Let’s grow together!

Session D4: Five Unconventional Tips that Make Health Simple: Presented by Alexa Schirm: If you feel like health is confusing, overwhelming, or even impossible, you’re not alone. But health doesn’t have to end here. Getting healthy is easier than you know. Join Iowa State alum and creator of the Living Well podcast, Alexa Schirm, as she breaks down the complexities we’ve attached to health while presenting you with five unconventional yet extremely practical action steps you can take to make health simple.

General Session Three

Panel: Insights on Board Leadership: Presented by Ann Wolf (Moderator), Michelle Book, and Susan Tronchetti: Board members with earned experience will offer insights gained through serving on agricultural, community, business, and nonprofit boards. They will discuss the important oversight and mission-driven roles of board members. You’ll learn how board members can focus on strengthening the role of the organization in the community and become leaders for the common good. The panel will share stories about the value of women’s involvement in community leadership.

Capstone: Partnering with Purpose: Building Meaningful Partnerships That Win!: Presented by Cleophus Franklin Jr.: Purpose is a belief that what you do matters and when you focus on what matters the results can be transformational! Purpose is what gets you up in the morning and keeps you going in the evening. When we have clarity of purpose, our contributions are amplified and extended from our homes, the workplace, and throughout the communities where we live. Purpose takes us from laying bricks to building castles. It is the difference maker! Join us as Author/Entrepreneur/Ag-Executive, Cleophus P. Franklin Jr. shares how to partner with purpose and build advocacy platforms that win!
Leading with Grace and Growth

Laila Hajji Down has called Iowa home for more than a decade. Laila has spoken to well over 150,000 people in over 45 states and across the globe. Laila served as the 2006-2007 Oklahoma FFA State Secretary and a 2008-2009 National FFA Vice President. Laila worked for Syngenta after graduating from Texas Tech University with a degree in Agricultural Education. She managed a multimillion-dollar sales territory for Syngenta. After Syngenta, she had the honor of teaching high school agricultural education in downtown Des Moines at Central Campus High School. While she is a Red Raider through and through, she earned a master’s degree from Iowa State University in Agricultural Education where she served as a teaching and research assistant. She’s owned and operated Point One Development since 2016. Laila lives in Johnston, Iowa with her husband Kevin (an Odebolt, Iowa native), three young daughters Audrie, Ella, and Gentrie and their son, Jackson.

Leave a Legacy Through Leasing, Conservation and Succession

Catherine DeLong is the Water Quality Program Manager for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. She works statewide to bring people together to share resources, ideas, and perspectives about water quality, and to help Iowans understand the role they can play in Iowa’s water future. She has an MS degree in Soil Science from Iowa State University, and a BA in International Relations from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Catherine has experience at all levels of conservation, having previously worked for the county-level Soil and Water Conservation Districts as well as an international non-profit serving conservation professionals.

Melissa O’Rourke is an Attorney and Farm and Agribusiness Management Specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Melissa practiced extensively in the fields of business and estate planning, human resources, immigration, and agricultural commercial litigation. She works with farm families and agribusinesses to facilitate planning and management. She is a sought-after presenter on agricultural legal issues. Melissa’s work with Iowa State University combines her background in education, agriculture, and law as she informs and advises members of the farm and agribusiness community on an expansive array of business planning and legal topics.

Jingyi Tong is a third-year PhD student in the Iowa State Department of Economics. Her major interests are agricultural, environmental, and labor economics; farmland management, conservation practices, carbon markets, crop and dairy insurance, and gender gaps. Jingyi serves as a research assistant for the Women Managing Farmland Ownership grant project which aims to enhance conservation, access, and generational transition of Iowa farmland. Jingyi graduated from China Agricultural University with BA in Economics and minors in Mathematics and International Study. She also earned an MS in Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Kitt Tovar Jensen is a Staff Attorney at ISU’s Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation. She focuses on areas of agricultural law including farm succession planning, environmental and natural resource law, regulatory law, and farm policy. Kitt also manages the ISU Beginning Farmer Center. Kitt earned her BS in Animal Science from Iowa State University and her JD, with honors, from Drake University while completing certificates in Food and Agricultural Law and Legislative Practice.
Tuesday Guest Speakers

Discover Your Leadership Strengths

Lora Leigh Chrystal led programs to increase the representation of women in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) workforce for twenty years with Iowa State University’s Program for Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE). She became a Certified CliftonStrengths® Coach in 2018. In her role as Director of WiSE, she saw first-hand the impact donors have on students. Lora Leigh joined the Iowa State University Foundation as a Director of Development for the College of Human Sciences in 2020 where she uses her strengths every day.

Dr. Jennifer Leptien is the Director of Learning Communities at Iowa State University. In 2018, she began incorporating CliftonStrengths® within the learning communities. As a Certified CliftonStrengths® Coach, Jen shares her enthusiasm for identifying and embracing individuals’ top five Strengths and discovering how they can be best employed to enhance academic, professional, and personal performance. Jen has facilitated Strengths to thousands of Iowa State students, faculty, and staff. Jen earned a PhD in human development and family studies from Iowa State.

You’re Not Alone: Fields of Wisdom Abound Through Mentoring

Gayle Coon, Program Specialist in the Professional Development Unit with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, provides leadership for the Organizational Mentor Program. She coordinates the Navigating Difference curriculum and the Coming Together for Racial Understanding workshops for staff, faculty, and council members. Gayle grew up on a farm in northwest Iowa and received a BS in elementary education from Iowa State University and a MS in education from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Gayle was a classroom teacher for 23 years.

Keli Tallman is the ISU Extension and Outreach Program Development and Evaluation Director. Keli provides leadership in developing and evaluating research-based educational program offerings and reporting impacts with national, state, university, and county-level stakeholders. She directs the organization’s first centralized reporting database. In 2016, Keli co-founded the mentor program and is a Mentor Academy facilitator. Keli received her BA in psychobiology and mathematics from Luther College and an MS in human development and family studies from Iowa State University.

Some Straight Talk About Farm Financial Statements

Nancy B. Brannaman had a passion for farming from an early age and earned her BS in Agricultural Business and Farm Operation, and MS in Agricultural Economics and Finance from Iowa State University. Joining the U.S. Department of State Foreign Service in 2000, she worked in embassy management, serving in Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Albania, Germany, South Sudan, and Washington, DC until 2014. She transitioned to U.S. Department of State remote work in 2016. Nancy is a sixth-generation farm owner, and started a U-pick in 2021.

Leslie S. Miller has worked closely with farm borrowers since 1972. In 1987, as head of the Agricultural Bankers Division of the American Bankers Association, she started the Farm Financial Standards Council. Leslie’s board service includes the Iowa Agricultural Development Authority, and Ag and Small Business Advisory Committee of the Chicago Federal Reserve. In 2018, the Iowa Bankers presented her with the James A. Leach Leadership in Banking Award. She retired from commercial banking in 2021 and now works as an Iowa State Farm Financial Planning Associate.
Women Impacting Agriculture Honorees

Laura Cunningham

Laura operates SkyView Farms with her husband, Aaron, and young son, Wyatt, in Floyd County. Laura raises Angus cow/calf pairs and spearheaded a new hoop barn to double the herd size. She received a grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and worked with ISU Extension and Outreach to create a ‘food hub’ for pork, poultry, and eggs sourced from area farms, as well as her own direct-to-consumer beef. Laura was instrumental in integrating reduced-tillage practices and rye cover crops for feed. Laura served as the chair of the state Farm Bureau Young Farmer Advisory Committee, where she worked with ISU Extension and Outreach to bring more young farmers to local programs. She was a recipient of the Young Farmer Leadership Award in 2020 and participated in the Transatlantic Dialogue and Consumer Engagement Study Trip to Germany in 2019. Laura served on the Iowa USDA Farm Service Agency committee, as well as the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture’s Butchery Innovation Task Force. Laura is a graduate of Iowa State University with a BS in Agricultural Business, and she is a member of the ISU Curtiss League of Awesomeness. Laura’s passion for ag literacy stems from her grandfather who chartered the first FFA Chapter at Rockford Senior High in 1950. In 2019, Laura started Central Springs AgEd Boosters to raise $400,000 to charter an FFA chapter at Central Springs High School. Through Ag in the Classroom, Laura gives elementary students virtual tours of her farm. She held an open house in partnership with the Coalition to Support Iowa’s Farmers to share insight on the benefits of calving barns. Laura has long been a proponent of women’s leadership. She is a past presenter for the Women in Ag Leadership Conference, Common Ground ag advocate, and member of the Zion Lutheran church’s sisterhood to advance women’s education.

Susan Kuennen

Susan recently retired from her career as a staff nurse at Mayo Clinic and manages her 160-acre farm in Fayette County. When Sue lost her husband due to illness in 2011, she sought out and built a team to assist her in farm decisions. With an artistic flair, she established conservation practices on her highly erodible farm to include fields, wetlands, and upland wildlife. In 2016 Sue received the Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year award. This past spring, Sue participated in the Annie’s Project farm management course for the third time. With the constant changes in agriculture and tight margins, she appreciates the helpful resources and connections with like-minded landowners. Sue served as the Fayette County representative to the Norman Borlaug Iowa State Research Farm board of directors. Sue is part of the ISU Master Gardener clubs in Chickasaw and Fayette counties and is a Master Conservationist. Sue donates her organic produce to the Hope Lodge in Rochester, MN. Several varieties of willows are planted on Sue’s farm for use in making baskets. Her Plow’n Snow willow and antler basket earned Sue a solo exhibition in the Macnider Museum in 2021. Sue often jokes that she bleeds green. She received the 4-H Alumni Award and 25-Year 4-H Leader awards. After working in substance abuse for 20 years, Sue attended college and graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the age of 46 in 2000. Sue is involved in her faith community at St. Peter’s Catholic church and served as the Dubuque Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women executive board secretary, 2014 to 2018.
Women Impacting Agriculture Honorees

Bridget Mahoney

Bridget is an agriculture teacher and FFA Advisor and operates Walridge Cattle Farm in Iowa County. Bridget is a powerhouse in the FFA and teaching world, impacting thousands of students, educators, and agricultural community members annually. She taught ten years at Lone Tree High School and is in her second year of revitalizing the Williamsburg High School ag program. While at Lone Tree, Bridget’s students won a National Chapter Award (Gold) and advanced to nationals in 2020 and 2021. Among her many accolades, Bridget received a U.S. Presidential Scholars Program Distinguished Teacher award. As an agricultural educator, she teaches students how to manage risk and plan for their future. Bridget sees her ability to get students involved in the community, even if they are not sure about participating, as one of her greatest accomplishments. This has a multiplying effect as they now see value in giving back. At Iowa State University, Bridget earned a BS in Animal Science and a BS in Agricultural Education – Communications. She led the Science with Practice program while earning her MS in Agricultural Education. She serves on the Advisory Committee for Ag Ed Pre-Service Teachers and founded the Mentoring Program in Iowa for agriculture teachers. During the pandemic, Bridget saw an opportunity to help people access affordable and high-quality beef products. She worked with customers to buy animals from Walridge Farms and find lockers to harvest the beef. From designing marketing pieces to creating solutions for her customers, Bridget is constantly innovating and adapting to serve her community and honor the legacy of her family’s farm. Bridget is focused on raising the best Angus beef and was named the Seedstock Producer of the Year. Bridget stated her proudest achievement is raising her daughter, Anastasia, on the same Century Farm that she grew up on.

Tara Neal

Tara is an Administrative and Sales Assistant at Nutrien Ag Solutions and operates JAC Farms and MCTA Pork with her family in Des Moines County. Nutrien Ag Solutions has a valued office administrator in Tara. She has supported the chemical, fertilizer, and seed sales at the Mediapolis location for 18 years. She organizes events incorporating learning opportunities for growers and community members. She works with ISU Extension and Outreach on farm safety day camps and hosts local high school and community college agriculture students for agronomic lessons at the Nutrien retail facility. Together with their parents, Tara and her sister, Amanda, carefully researched how to successfully transition the farm business. The daughters and their spouses now are responsible for day-to-day operations and long-term decisions for the grain and swine farm. Staying innovative is important to Tara. Her family uses solar panel electricity generation and precision farming practices such as grid soil sampling and variable rate fertilizer. Tara and her family practice no-till on the highly erodible acres and work with USDA-NRCS to create land management plans such as building terraces. Tara graduated from Iowa State University with a BS in Agricultural Education in 2002. She served on the Des Moines County Extension Council from 2013-2016, contributing as secretary, vice president, and president. Tara is a big supporter of 4-H and FFA in her community and served on an advisory board that started the Mediapolis FFA Alumni Program. She is a member of the Southeastern Community College Agriculture Advisory Council. Tara recently started a homeschool cooperative in Mediapolis where she develops many agricultural themed lessons. She is a leader for her church’s Kid’s Club and serves on the community fellowship committee. Tara is most proud of being able to manage home, farm, and work by creating a culture of care for each.
Wednesday Guest Speakers

Keynote: Changing the World One Step at a Time

Amy Cronin is a mother of six children, a hog, chicken, and cash crop producer, and business owner in Huron County, Ontario. She and her husband, Mike, farm in Ontario, Iowa and Missouri and thrive on creating sustainable and innovative business plans that enable them to work with their team toward their vision, “Progressive, Prosperous, Best-in-Class”. Amy is actively involved at the local, provincial and national levels. She is the chair of the Farm Products Marketing Commission, and Vice Chair for the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the University of Saskatchewan. Her leadership includes an eight-year contribution to the Ontario Pork Board of Directors, four years with Swine Health Ontario, and co-chair of the Minister of Agriculture’s Ag Growth Steering Committee in 2016. With a desire to contribute to community, Amy serves as Chair of the board of trustees for the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board. Amy is a current Nuffield Scholar, investigating on-farm business risk management, having just returned from Africa. She is a graduate of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership and Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management programs. Amy’s commitment to family, farm life, and industry fuels her passion for having an impact and making the world a better place for the next generation.

University Welcome

John Lawrence is Iowa State University’s Vice President for Extension and Outreach. He is a professor of economics and has served Iowa State University since 1991. He began his career as an extension livestock economist, but he’s had many roles since, including director of the Iowa Beef Center, associate dean in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and director of Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension and Outreach. Earlier this year he served as interim chair of the Department of Animal Science. He was raised on a crop and livestock farm in southwest Iowa.

Managing Your Cyber Ecosystem

Doug Jacobson is Director of the Iowa State University Center for Cybersecurity Innovation and Outreach and a Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering. He is the lead PI in the National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity sponsored ReCIPE coalition which is focused on securing cyber-physical systems. Doug also created the Iowa Cyber Hub, which is dedicated to increasing the cyber workforce in Iowa. Doug has given over 300 presentations in the area of computer security. He also created a computer security education and outreach program targeted at the general public, post-secondary students, and faculty.

Megan Wheelock is the Information Security Officer at John Deere Financial where she oversees all cybersecurity activity for John Deere Financial’s global operations. She is an Iowa State alum with a double major in Accounting and Management Information Systems. Megan spent much of her career within the realm of cybersecurity, risk, and compliance within the finance services industry. Five years ago, she found her way back to Iowa working for John Deere. Outside of her day-to-day work, she’s an active supporter of ISU recruiting efforts, frequent attender of ISU Cyber Defense Competitions, council member for the Cybersecurity Engineering Department, and supporter of the inaugural ISU Cyber Tractor Challenge.
What Makes a Leader? Lessons Rooted in Farming for Generations

**Patricia Dyar** went from a farm in northeast Iowa to executive roles including past President of Banco John Deere in Brazil. Her career covers a forty-year journey in finance and banking. Before retiring, Patricia left an impressive leadership trek across many functional areas during her tenure at John Deere Financial. Her experience includes collections, agricultural lending, construction marketing, agribusiness sales, and human resources. She led several strategic priorities focused on strategic customers and the Wirtgen Integration, which represented the largest acquisition ($5 billion) in John Deere’s 180-plus year history. Dyar earned her BS in Public Service Administration and MBA from Iowa State University.

New Rules of Remote Work

**Andrea Arias** got her PhD in Plant Breeding and genetics from Iowa State University in 2012. She has more than ten years of experience in agricultural product development, machine learning, and analytics to improve products and product development processes. Previously, she was the Global Data Science Leader in Farming Solutions at Corteva Agriscience, where she led the team of data science experts supporting seed, biological seed treatment, and crop protection product development. In October, Andrea joined Jord Biosciences and will focus on accelerating the use of data to unlock microbiomes use for agriculture.

**Nancy B. Brannaman** had a passion for farming from an early age and earned her BS in Agricultural Business and Farm Operation, and MS in Agricultural Economics and Finance from Iowa State University. Joining the U.S. Department of State Foreign Service in 2000, she worked in embassy management, serving in Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Albania, Germany, South Sudan, and Washington, DC until 2014. She transitioned to U.S. Department of State remote work in 2016. Nancy is a sixth-generation farm owner, manages her family’s farm in Illinois, and started a U-pick lavender/berry/flower farm on an acreage in Johnson County, Iowa in 2021.

**Karen Grote** has almost 20 years of experience with Bayer Crop Science, and over half of those working as a remote employee. Through that tenure, she has led direct and matrixed teams in the Plant Breeding and Plant Biotechnology organizations and is currently a Digital Lead within the Enterprise IT team. Her mission is to accelerate change and increase efficiency in ag research so that the best products get into farmers’ hands and fields faster. She and her family live on a small farm near Boone, Iowa.

**Melissa O’Rourke** is an Attorney and Farm and Agribusiness Management Specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Melissa practiced extensively in the fields of business and estate planning, human resources, immigration, and agricultural commercial litigation. She works with numerous farm families and agribusinesses to facilitate planning and management. She is a sought-after presenter on agricultural legal issues. Melissa’s work with Iowa State University combines her background in education, agriculture, and law as she informs and advises members of the farm and agribusiness community on business planning and legal topics.
Agricultural Carbon Markets

**Alejandro Plastina** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at Iowa State University, specializing in agricultural production and technology, with an emphasis on farm business and financial management. His research focuses on the socioeconomic drivers of conservation practices, voluntary pest resistance management, carbon farming, and agricultural productivity. He was recognized as the first Agricultural Economics Fellow by the Farm Foundation in 2021. Prior to joining ISU, Alejandro worked as Senior Economist in Washington DC, and graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Alexis Stevens** serves ISU Extension and Outreach as a Farm Management Specialist in West Central Iowa. She provides research-based information on farm business management, grain marketing, land leasing, government programs, and succession and transition. Alexis is a graduate of The Agribusiness Association of Iowa’s leadership academy. She is an Army veteran where she ensured a safe food supply for troops in the Middle East. Alexis earned a BS in Psychology and an MBA from the University of Maryland. She previously managed her family’s cattle and row crop farm and now lives in Jefferson with her husband, Chad, and 10 children.

Incorporating Chaos Theory into Your Strategy

**Lisa Shimkat** is the State Director of the Iowa Small Business Development Center. The SBDC has 15 centers across the state that provide business counseling for entrepreneurs in all areas of starting, operating and expanding a business, including utilizing existing community loan programs in partnership with banks and federal programs. Lisa has an MBA from Iowa State University. She served on the Securities and Exchange Commission Advisory Committee on Small and Emerging Companies through 2017. Currently, she serves on the Iowa Economic Development Authority Board, and the national ASBDC board. She is a member of the Fort Dodge School Board.

Ignite Your Spark: Activating Your Leadership Style

**Magan Lewis** serves as Bayer Crop Science Equipment and Automated Field Sensing Lead. She oversees the development, validation, and global deployment of high-impact digital tools and sensors. Magan is an award-winning scientific leader, including being named an American Association for the Advancement of Science IF/THEN Ambassador, Des Moines Business Record’s Forty Under 40, Seed World’s 2022 Future Leader of the Seed Industry, and appointee to Governor Reynolds South-Central Regional STEM Advisory Board. Magan is a STEM education outreach fanatic, diversity and inclusion advocate, board member for the Science Center of Iowa, and co-leader of her local 4-H Clover Kids. Magan holds a PhD in Plant Breeding and Genetics from North Dakota State University. She resides in Des Moines, Iowa with her husband and two daughters. The Lewis family enjoys hiking, traveling, catching frogs, playing piano, and NDSU Football.

Five Unconventional Tips that Make Health Simple

**Alexa Schirm** felt that for most of her life, health existed as something *just* out of reach. She spent her younger years witnessing women she admired follow diet fads, endured college nutrition lectures where calorie counting was expected to fix inner issues, and touted herself as a nutrition expert while suffering through her own personal health crisis. This led her to the realization that we’re approaching health in the wrong way. Health is never about what you can do to your body but how you can work with your body to mobilize energy. Alexa wants to show people how to make health simple, proving that all of us have the power to live well. Health is inside of you.
Panel: Insights on Board Leadership

**Michelle Book** is president and CEO of Food Bank of Iowa. Under her leadership, Food Bank of Iowa has transformed from once underperforming to one of the top six Feeding America food banks in the country. Previously, Michelle traveled the world leading global community engagement for DuPont Pioneer and serving as the global compliance manager for John Deere Finance. At various times, she was an internal auditor, a hospital controller, and a hog farmer. Michelle earned a BS in Business Administration from Iowa State University. She is a Des Moines Business Record Woman of Influence, a “leader to know,” and is among the metro’s top 25 Most Influential Business Leaders. Michelle is an Iowa State University Alumni Lifetime Achievement Awardee and accepted the Bell Tower of Fame Award from her hometown of Jefferson, Iowa. Her board service includes the Kennedy Center National Performing Arts Council and the U.S. Bank Advisory Council.

**Susan Tronchetti** is the External Affairs lead for Landus. She is a business development professional and co-owner of Tronchetti & Tronchetti, Inc., a Greene County corn and soybean farming operation owned by Susan and her husband, Dan. Previously, Susan was a grain merchandiser for West Central Cooperative and an owner of a Pioneer Seed business. Susan serves on the Landus Cooperative board of directors, Land O’Lakes Executive Board Council, Nationwide Insurance Board Council, and Home State Bank in Jefferson board of directors. Susan is a graduate of Iowa State University with a degree in agricultural business and farm management.

**Ann Wolf** serves as Co-Program Director for MidwestHealthyAg.ORG, a grant funded research project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to study Midwest health and climate solutions. Ann’s consulting firm Clear Steam Solutions specializes in agriculture management, economic community development, nonprofit organization, and leadership. Ann holds a BFA from the University of Iowa and a MS in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Development from the University of Northern Iowa. Ann was recognized for soil conservation, water quality enhancement, natural habitat, and prairie restoration projects on her 300-acre farm.

**Capstone: Partnering with Purpose: Building Meaningful Partnerships that Win!**

**Cleophus “Cleo” Franklin Jr.’s** leadership expertise is globally recognized. His passion for designing robust business growth and brand strategies, while implementing innovative, disruptive business models has benefited many global businesses and industries. Franklin’s values and beliefs are centered on approaching difficult challenges with curiosity and a beginner’s mindset. He is a purpose-driven leader who embraces servant leadership and invests in the personal and professional development of the next generation of leaders. His leadership career spans over thirty years with John Deere, Case-New Holland, and Mahindra as a global executive. Franklin’s global leadership (coffeewithcleo.com) books focus on Franklin’s passion for providing personal and professional leadership development career pathways for anyone who is leading or aspiring to lead. He founded Franklin Strategic Solutions (franklinss.com), a global consulting business and Morningside University’s “Franklin Leadership Foundation.” Franklin serves as a Senior Corporate Fellow and adjunct professor at the University of Houston. Franklin earned his MS from the Kenan-Flagler School of Business at the University of North Carolina and a BS from Morningside University, located in Sioux City, Iowa. Cleo and his wife, Lois, reside in Cypress, Texas.
Ann Johanns serves Iowa State University Extension and Outreach as an Extension Program Specialist. She coordinates the library of materials on the Ag Decision Maker website, conducts research on emerging agricultural issues, and supports the farm management team. She is passionate about sharing unbiased data and resources with agricultural producers, landowners, and agribusiness professionals to help them make informed decisions. A graduate of Iowa State University, Ann earned a BS in Agricultural Business and MS in Agricultural Education. Ann lives in rural Mitchell County with her husband, Joe, and three active sons on their crop and livestock farm.

Kiley Allan is an undergraduate student in Agriculture and Life Sciences Education focusing on Communication and Animal Science. She grew up on a small farrow-to-finish and cow/calf operation in Le Mars, Iowa. In high school she stayed active in 4-H, FFA, band, orchestra, choir, speech, and Thespians. At Iowa State University, Kiley enjoys her time on campus as she participates in Block and Bridle, Collegiate Cattlemen, and Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow. During her free time, she enjoys listening to music with her friends, showing pigs and cattle with her family, and serving as a volunteer for the Iowa FFA Association.

Sylvia Brown and her husband are raising three children on their family farm in Southeast Iowa. They raise row crops, cattle, and sheep. Sylvia took online classes and graduated in 2015 with her banking and finance degree. She has now been in banking for 16 years. Sylvia is currently an agricultural lender, serving as a Vice President/Loan Officer for First State Bank of Lynnville. Sylvia is actively involved as a Clover Kids leader and serves on a board for the local saddle club and archery team.

Krista Downing is co-owner of Triple Downing Cattle LLC in Linden, Iowa and is the Program Coordinator for Guthrie County ISU Extension and Outreach. In her farm role, she assists in day-to-day decisions and operations. Krista enjoys working with her cattle and assisting her family on spring and fall field work. In her extension role, Krista brings education and resources to Guthrie County through hands on learning opportunities. Krista earned her BS in Agricultural Education/Communications in 2017 from Iowa State University and is a passionate advocate for the agriculture industry.

Sara Lira, Plant Breeding Research and Development Scientist, is researcher at Corteva Agriscience in Johnston, IA. She received a BS in ecology, an MS in Genetics, and a PhD in Plant Breeding from Iowa State University. Dr. Lira spent ten years as a corn breeder at Corteva but has recently turned her focus to breeding plants for emerging climate-positive cropping systems. Her work has lately emphasized the development of cropping systems, including annual and perennial cover crops and double crops for the Midwest.

Marilee Jones was raised with pigs and dairy cows. She began farming with her husband in 1994 and recently purchased the family farm she grew up on. Her family raises cattle and grain and operates a custom spraying and farming business. She is committed to transitioning a strong farming legacy to her five children. With so many changes in the industry, Marilee is always willing to learn and adapt to new methods. Marilee earned her real estate license and hopes to be a resource for women landowners. She is always encouraging women and girls to pursue opportunities in agriculture.

Monica Lursen, an alumna of Iowa State University, retired from her career as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist after 46 years. Following her husband’s death in 2011, she took over management of the family business and is actively transitioning Lursen Farms and Lursen Trucking, LLC to her sons. Monica previously blended her nutrition expertise and love of farming to educate others as Executive Director of the Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Monica chaired the College of Human Sciences Council, is a member of the Order of the Knoll, and was one of 39 “Faces of Iowa State” portraits painted by Rose Franzen.
Janette Smith is the GROW Grain Marketing Advisor Lead for Landus. She has experience originating grain, creating marketing plans with farmers, and leading within the agricultural industry. Her previous roles with West Central Cooperative included regional manager, senior marketing specialist, grain operations manager, agronomy sales/marketing manager, and location manager. Janette graduated from Des Moines Area Community College with an AAS in Agribusiness. To further her skills, she earned her Board of Trade certification in 1998, certificate from Purdue University in Strategic Agri Marketing in 2003, and completed the University of Missouri - Columbia, Institute of Cooperative Leadership program in 2014.

Alexis Stevens serves ISU Extension and Outreach as a Farm Management Specialist in West Central Iowa. She provides research-based information on farm business management, grain marketing, land leasing, government programs, and succession and transition. Alexis is a graduate of The Agribusiness Association of Iowa’s leadership academy. She is an Army veteran where she ensured a safe food supply for troops in the Middle East. Alexis earned a BS in Psychology and an MBA from the University of Maryland. She previously managed her family’s cattle and row crop farm and now lives in Jefferson with her husband, Chad, and 10 children.

Jingyi Tong is a third-year PhD student in the Iowa State University Department of Economics. Her major fields of interest are agricultural, environmental, and labor economics; farmland management, conservation practices, carbon market, crop and dairy insurance, and gender gaps. Jingyi serves as a research assistant in the Women Managing Farmland Ownership grant project which aims to enhance conservation, access, and generational transition of Iowa farmland. Jingyi graduated from China Agricultural University with BA in Economics and minors in Mathematics and International Study. She also earned an MS in Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Advisory Committee Members

Melissa O’Rourke is an Attorney and Farm and Agribusiness Management Specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Melissa practiced extensively in the fields of business and estate planning, human resources, immigration, and agricultural commercial litigation. She works with numerous farm families and agribusinesses to facilitate planning and management. She is a sought-after presenter throughout the region on agricultural legal issues. Melissa’s work with Iowa State University combines her background in education, agriculture, and law as she informs and advises members of the farm and agribusiness community on an expansive array of business planning and legal topics.

Alexandra Osborn is an undergraduate student in Agricultural and Rural Policy Studies and Agronomy. She is from Wellington, Missouri where her family operates a corn and soybean century farm. Alexandra was active in FFA participating in public speaking, district office, career development events, and national conventions. Alexandra is active on campus as the Agriculture Policy Club board secretary, as a member of the American Seed Trade Association, and assisting in the development of marketing strategy for the Agricultural and Rural Policy Studies major. In her free time, Alexandra enjoys spending time with family and friends and being on the farm.

Rylee Sloss is an undergraduate student majoring in Agricultural Studies with the Multidisciplinary Option. Her emphasis areas are in Animal Science, Agriculture Business, and Communications. Her minors are Animal Science and General Business. Rylee grew up in Guthrie Center, Iowa where she was active in 4-H and FFA. She maintains a cow/calf operation with her younger brother. She was a Summer Assistant at the Adair County Extension Office. On campus, Rylee is involved with the Farm Operations Club and Collegiate Cattlemen. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her friends and family, reading, and working on the farm.

Jingyi Tong is a third-year PhD student in the Iowa State University Department of Economics. Her major fields of interest are agricultural, environmental, and labor economics; farmland management, conservation practices, carbon market, crop and dairy insurance, and gender gaps. Jingyi serves as a research assistant in the Women Managing Farmland Ownership grant project which aims to enhance conservation, access, and generational transition of Iowa farmland. Jingyi graduated from China Agricultural University with BA in Economics and minors in Mathematics and International Study. She also earned an MS in Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Lisa Scarbrough is a Communications Specialist with Iowa State University Department of Economics, and Extension and Outreach Farm Management Team. Lisa co-leads the Women in Ag Program. She produces videos, designs marketing materials, coordinates promotion, manages websites, creates program impact reports, and publishes an online newsletter. Lisa works with extension professionals across the state to promote events for women and leads the Women Impacting Agriculture recognition program. Lisa serves on the Women Land and Legacy board. Lisa earned a BS in Communication Studies with a minor in Journalism from the University of Iowa.

Madeline Schultz is the Women in Ag Program Manager with the Iowa State University Department of Economics, and the Extension and Outreach Farm Management Team. Madeline and her team received the 2019 USDA Research, Education, and Economics Undersecretary’s Award in recognition of innovative courses, conferences, videos, and tours impacting the lives of women in agriculture who are key stakeholders in the production of safe food. She serves on the Annie’s Project national board and the Iowa Women in Agriculture board. Madeline earned a BS in Economics, BS in Agribusiness, and MBA from Iowa State University.
Together We Lead

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Women in Ag Mission

To improve the quality of life in Iowa by providing research-based education programs that expand agricultural business, improve natural resource management, and support the community of women in agriculture.
Together We Lead

Join us in the conversation!
www.extension.iastate.edu/womeninag

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We want to hear from you! Use #WIAL2022 during this event to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations.

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