



# NETWORK

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The Iowa Association of County Extension Councils serves as a vehicle for networking between county extension councils of Iowa, Iowa State University, and government leaders to promote and strengthen all local and statewide Extension programs.

## IACEC Awards Mini-Grants to Increase Audiences in Counties

Last fall, IACEC issued a challenge to all County Extension Councils to reach new people in their counties either through the development of a new program or the expansion of an existing program to target a new audience. To further encourage councils, the IACEC Board of Directors offered five \$500 mini-grants — one per administrative area — to be used for programming.

“I received good responses from counties,” said Connie Cannon, IACEC marketing committee chairperson. “We had 19 applications for the mini-grants.” In an effort to share programming ideas with IACEC members, the recipients of the mini-grants are profiled below.

Black Hawk County will use their mini-grant to expand their work with the Latino population in the county. They will offer a summer internship to an ISU marketing student (from Mexico) to conduct a needs assessment and to develop a marketing plan for Extension programming to the Hispanic community in Black Hawk County. The mini-grant will help leverage community funds to support this intern.

Crawford and Ida counties submitted a joint application to offer *Annie’s Project*. This program is specifically designed to reach women involved in agriculture with the topics of production, finances, marketing, legal information, and human resources. The mini-grant funds will allow these counties to offer this program to empower women with the skills, confidence, and abilities to assume

leadership roles in agriculture.

In Monroe County, an already-successful after-school

program targets higher-risk students, many with little family support, who are having trouble in school. The mini-grant will enable staff to expand the program to reach the 19 students who have been on the waiting list since fall.

Last summer Story County conducted a marketing survey designed to identify their citizens’ knowledge of ISU Extension. From that needs assessment, they worked with their External Relations Field Specialist to develop a marketing plan to create an “identity.” They will use the mini-grant funds to help cover the costs of creating public service announcements, a new marketing brochure, radio spots, and billboards.

The *Boots to Heels Conference* in Atlantic will bring women together from Audubon, Cass, and Shelby counties. The mini-grant will help empower rural women within their families, their businesses, and their communities through a series of workshops that address topics varying from marketing to home businesses to quilting.

Given the success of the mini-grant effort, the IACEC Board of Directors plans to offer the program again in the fall.



Monroe County after-school program participants work on homework.

# Issues & Answers

## Spotlight Issue: Extension Switchboard Blog

### What is a blog and why does ISU Extension have one?

A blog is short for “web log.” Technically, a blog is a personal publishing system with chronologically arranged entries, automatic archives, and a collection of links. It is inexpensive to start up and maintain. Culturally, a blog is about voice, direct contact, knowledge filtering, multi-subjectivity, and conversation.

As Dr. Jack Payne, Vice President for Extension and Outreach, launches his new blog — *The Extension Switchboard* — his goal is for it to be a public forum where county extension council members and Iowans can voice their ideas and concerns about issues that affect our state. He hopes it will also serve as a platform to discuss what Extension is doing, can do, and should do to move Iowa forward.

“I would like to see the blog develop into a spirited, ongoing conversation about the issues that are important to citizens,” said Payne. “I hope to hear from extension council members, our citizens’ advisory council, staff

and current, as well as potential, users of our services.”

“I think *The Switchboard* will be an effective way to communicate with Jack and others in extension,” shares John Laflen, four-year extension council member in Winnebago County. “It is hard to beat this format for learning about people who we can interact with who have issues or thoughts similar to ours. I don’t do blogs myself, but I will make an exception in this case.”

“I believe it is one more tool council members can use to stay current on what is going on with ISUE,” said Brian Waldstein, Buena Vista County extension council member and IACEC board member. “Although I like the phone, the blog is probably a more effective way to communicate with Jack and other council members who have similar concerns, due to time constraints we all have.”

Dr. Payne would like to focus on major issues in his blog, but anything that relates to ISU Extension is fair game. He has posted comments on economic development and the bioeconomy, but he has also congratulated people who have won awards or received recognition. Comments on ISU Extension programs and posting things just for fun are common entries as well.

“I’d really like everyone to feel comfortable using the blog to interact with me and with each other on issues related to ISUE Extension,” said Payne. “Don’t wait for me to bring up an issue, just go to the blog, click on the *Council Members: It’s Your Turn* link on the left-hand side of the page and let me know what you think! I make it a point to check the blog regularly for comments and I will respond to those comments as soon as I can.”

To check out the *Extension Switchboard* blog, go to [www.extension.iastate.edu/mt/switchboard](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/mt/switchboard).

### Don’t Forget...

**Board Nominations** are due March 15. If you are interested in running for the IACEC Board of Directors, you can download the nomination form at the IACEC website. **Scholarship applications** are also due March 15. The scholarship program is open to graduating high school seniors or post-secondary students who are sons and daughters of council members, and to council members themselves. Both forms are available at <http://www.iacec.info> under the “forms” link.

## Councils Urged to Attend Legislative Day on March 14

“IACEC Legislative Day is a fun and easy way for ISU Extension supporters to become more involved in the political process and to get to know their local Legislators,” says Sybil Soukup, IACEC President-Elect. “IACEC provides participants with all the information and instructions they need to effectively lobby their Senators and Representatives on important ISU Extension issues.”

Join IACEC at the **Des Moines Botanical Center on Wed.,**

**March 14<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 a.m.** The group will meet to discuss a plan of action for the day and then commute to the Capitol by shuttle bus to meet with Legislators. Since we anticipate other lobbying groups to be at the Capitol that day, it is very important that everyone involved **wear “ISU red”** to show group support for Extension.

“With the major party change

in the statehouse this year, it more important than ever that Extension’s voice is heard in our State Capitol,” Soukup says. “ISU Extension plays an important role in the growth and development of Iowans young and old and also in the economic development and viability of our state. It is important that we share our Extension success stories with our elected officials.”

Registration information is available at [www.iacec.info](http://www.iacec.info) at the “legislative news” link.

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## IACEC Recommends Review of Partnership Agreement

As we enter our final year of the current partnership agreement between county extension councils and ISU Extension, plans for a future agreement are taking place.

“Our objective for the agreement is to maintain high-quality staff and availability of high-quality Extension programs to address the unique needs of each county,” said Mary Holz-Clause, Interim Associate Vice President for Extension and Outreach.

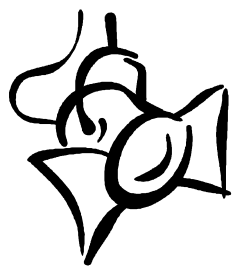
“A group of three IACEC board members met via teleconference on January 16,” Pat Griffin, IACEC board member said. “After reviewing a list of items to be addressed for the next few years, it was recommended that a committee be formed to review and revise the partnership agreement.”

“To ensure all councils and areas of the state are represented, the committee will consist of two council members and one staff member from each administrative area,” said Griffin. “We are striving to have a cross section of rural, urban, and suburban counties on the committee,” Holz-Clause said. Laurie Gustafson, Director of Budget and Finance and Holz-Clause will serve as facilitators for the committee.

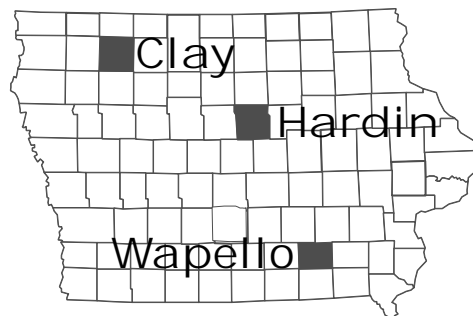
“Any issue that the committee wishes to discuss will be on the table,” said Holz-Clause. “At this time, anticipated issues include an agreement to allow one adjustment per year for housing field specialists, an agreement to allow greater flexibility for market adjustments for the actual cost of County Extension Education Directors, and a discussion on how to handle federal, state and

university budget adjustments as they occur annually.” “This Committee of 15 will need to know the dollars involved that are being added to this mix to make the next plan,” said Griffin. “I do not feel that the entire format will change. I do want to know what new items are added and why. Also, we need to know what limits can be set for 2009 and then for the Council's increases in 2010.”

“This is truly a partnership between Iowa State University and the Extension Councils,” said Holz-Clause. “Like any good partnership there needs to be give and take and good faith on both sides. I am excited to work with the committee to craft a partnership that addresses all of our issues. We look forward to continuing this partnership environment that has made an excellent Extension Service.”



# County Spotlight



## Clay County Extension Adds Visibility with New Sign

Developing better visibility for Clay County Extension was a goal identified by council members during a multi-county Extension Council event where a long-range marketing plan was discussed. The Council identified enhanced outdoor signage as a means to increase visibility the Extension office.

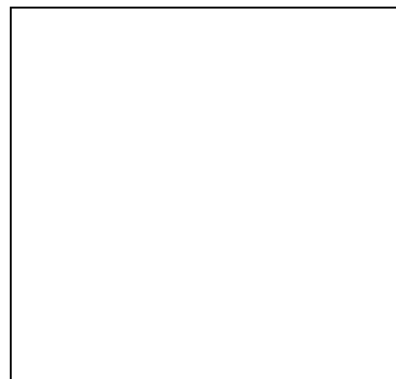
Clay County Extension wanted to build client recognition of

### Quick Facts for Clay County

Population (2005 est.): 16,897  
 Pop. Change 2000-2005: - 2.7%  
 Minority Population: 1.4%  
 Land area: 568 square miles  
 Med. Household Income: \$39,004  
 County Seat: Spencer

“who we are” and “what we do.” The goal of the Clay County Extension Council was supported by a statewide organizational effort to develop a consistent, “branded” image for outdoor signage.

In planning for this project, the council studied the City of Spencer’s sign ordinance regulations, worked with building owners, sought design advice from ISU Extension to Communities, and allocated additional resources to its marketing budget. “We have been budgeting for this new look for several years,” said Gary Johnson, Council Chair.



Clay County Extension’s new lighted sign and door canopy.

The result was an interior-lit sign and door canopies that were installed in the fall of 2006. “We wanted to make Clay County Extension easy to find,” Gary Johnson said. The new light certainly does the trick.

## Updated IACEC Awards Program Provides Funds for Counties

In an effort to support Extension Councils in their programming efforts IACEC is offering a cash gift to award recipients this year.

“We will be offering \$200 for programming to the county served by the recipient of the Distinguished Extension Council Service Award. We will also be offering a similar cash gift to the Program/Project Award,” said Connie Cannon, IACEC marketing committee

chairperson. “The cash gift will give extension councils a little boost to continue excellent Extension work.”



“I would encourage all counties to submit nominations. There are a lot of great extension council members across the state who donate time and

talent to promote extension,” said Gary Smith, IACEC President. “IACEC gives councils opportunities to recognize these individuals as well the programs they have helped create.”

An electronic version of the award criteria and application is available at our web site, [www.iacec.info](http://www.iacec.info), through the “forms” link. **Nominations are due June 15.**

## Hardin County Hosts Special Dinner

ISU Vice President for Extension and Outreach Jack Payne and his wife, Renee, were special guests at a holiday dinner hosted by the Hardin County Extension Council hosted on January 13.

The guests enjoyed social time, a dinner, and a program with the council, extension staff, and spouses. Retiring council members were recognized with

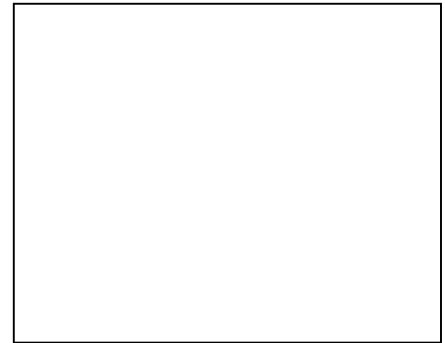
### Quick Facts for Hardin County

Population (2005 est.): 18,003  
Pop. change 2000-2005: -4.3%  
Minority Population: 1.5%  
Land area: 569 square miles  
Med. Household Income: \$36,865  
County Seat: Eldora

certificates of appreciation and recently-elected council members were recognized with certificates of election.

Jack Payne spoke about his first year as leader of ISU Extension and his vision for county extension programming.

The evening was an opportunity for new council members and staff to get acquainted with veteran council members and staff. It was also an opportunity for spouses to learn more about extension, the vision for extension in Hardin County and the importance of their supportive role.



Front row, l to r: Francis Fritz, Gayle Granzow, Kristi Harris, Valerie Cook. Back row, l to r: Dennis Friest, Scott Bahr, Les Clampitt. Absent: Janelle Cook-Guiles and Jeff Roll.

“It was inspiring to our council and staff that Dr. Payne would make a special effort to fellowship with us,” said Scott Bahr, Hardin County Extension Council Chair.

## Wapello County Starts Junior Master Gardener Program

With the mission is to grow good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success and service through a unique gardening experience, Wapello County Extension started a Junior Master Gardener Program (JMG) this year.

Through JMG, 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders get the chance to get their hands in the dirt while learning about insects, botany, wildlife,

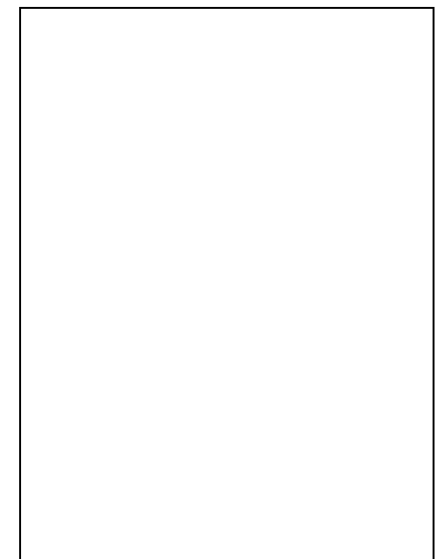
### Quick Facts for Wapello County

Population (2005 est.): 35,965  
Pop. change 2000-2005: - 0.2%  
Minority Population: 3.1%  
Land area: 431 square miles  
Med. Household Income: \$34,448  
County Seat: Ottumwa

and even social skills. “The students are energetic and always ready to get dirty,” said Lynn Schulte Wapello County Horticulture Program Assistant.

“I like learning how to make new plants grow. It has been fun to learn about living things”, Mikayla Hance, a student in the JMG program, said .

Through the summer the JMGs will be working on a garden plot. They will learn about site planning, planting, and care of the educational garden. Wapello County’s JMGs will also start a pumpkin patch to raise money for additional activities.



A Junior Master Gardener waters a transplant.

“It is a real pleasure seeing them learn more about the earth around them,” Schulte said.

## IACEC Board Follows Up on Cougar Mountain

*Cougar Mountain* sounds like a vacation spot or fancy resort, but all Extension Counties in Iowa know it is neither.

### What is *Cougar Mountain*?

This is the new accounting system for Extension that will be implemented in each county. The accounting system was used in ten pilot counties throughout the state and then expanded to another 15 counties. The goal is to have all County Extension Councils on the *Cougar Mountain* accounting system as close to July 1 as possible.

### Why did Extension change accounting systems?

The State of Iowa auditor noted the *Quicken 98* system currently in use, did not provide an acceptable audit trail. *Cougar Mountain* will have significantly enhanced capabilities to replace *Quicken*. It was noted that *Quicken 98* does not have an integrated payroll system, which means duplicate entry. Duplicate entry systems often produce more errors. It was also believed that *Quicken 98* reports do not provide essential management information and can be difficult to understand.

### How was *Cougar Mountain* accounting software chosen?

A strategic planning committee was formed. It consisted of council members, county directors, and state personnel, along with an area director and outside bookkeeper. They then determined what was needed in a new accounting system.



Software vendors that met these requirements demonstrated their software to the planning committee and the ISU Purchasing Agent.

### Have there been any problems with the pilot counties using *Cougar Mountain*?

Some counties currently using the new accounting system have experienced problems. Like any new system, becoming familiar with the software may take time. Pilot county CEEDs and OAs are providing insight and lessons learned from their experiences in setting up the chart of accounts which will assist in smoother transition to *Cougar Mountain* for others. Area directors are scheduling small training clusters of counties to help with the transition to *Cougar Mountain*.

### What do counties running *Cougar Mountain* say about this accounting system?

Calhoun County was one of the first ten pilot counties to run *Cougar Mountain*. They are now entirely on this accounting system. "Payroll and the county's extension audit are much easier with the new accounting system," said Cindy

Souder, Office Manager for Calhoun County Extension. Having worked with a similar accounting system before becoming the Office Manager for Calhoun County made the transition easier for Souder. "It is suggested that the counties keep double books for a short time while starting *Cougar Mountain*," said Souder.

Counties experiencing problems are waiting for further training and refinement to the program. Some counties have expressed concern that if they have to outsource their accounting and training to CPAs, it would impact an already tight budget.

The IACEC Board of Directors is monitoring the progress of *Cougar Mountain*. At recent board meetings, questions and concerns from county councils were discussed with ISUE administrators. The board is also being informed on the progress and training of *Cougar Mountain*.

At the January 27, 2007 board meeting, board members learned that four counties are using *Cougar Mountain* totally and another nine to twelve counties are using *Quicken* and *Cougar Mountain* side by side. "We are in a wait and see position now with the new accounting system", said Gary Smith, IACEC Board President. "We encourage council members to call their IACEC Board representative if they have any questions or concerns."



## Boosts for Your Budget

### *Kossuth County Works Multiple Revenue Streams*

“Campaign committees have worked hard to pass the Extension referendum in Kossuth County but it has been turned down numerous times,” said Bob Behnkendorf, Kossuth County Extension Education Director.

Passing the tax referendum has been crucial to many county budgets to maintain quality programs. So, how can a county that has not passed the referendum maintain good programs?

Kossuth County has not only maintained quality programs, but has expanded their

programs by turning to multiple streams of funding.

“The organized opposition to passing the Extension referendum wanted the Kossuth Extension Council to receive funds by making a request to the county’s Board of Supervisors,” said Behnkendorf. That’s just what the extension council did. Their annual request to the county supervisors has been ranging from \$4,000 to \$25,000 per year.

This year, Kossuth County Extension is receiving \$25,000. This grant is based on the youth programming provided by the Extension Staff. Every year the Supervisors review these programs and their impact to determine future funding.

Kossuth County Extension has also worked hard to develop partnership programs that allow sponsorship or donations to reduce costs to the Kossuth Extension budget.

They are also very active in grant writing. “We wrestle with the time taken to do grant writing with no guarantees of receiving funds,” said Behnkendorf, “and the time which could be used for educating that taken away to write grants.

Kossuth Extension signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Palo Alto County in July 2005 to share the services of a County Extension Educator. Kossuth County Extension feels the sharing agreement will bring significant dollar savings to both counties. The downside is that it reduces the education time the Director has to give, placing more responsibility on county staff.

***If your county has some tips on how to generate revenue and would like to share them in this feature, please contact the Network editor.***

## Official Notice of Special Meeting of the Membership

The Board of Directors of the Iowa Association of County Extension Councils has called a special meeting of the members on March 14, 2007 at 9:40 a.m. at the Des Moines Botanical Center to discuss a proposed amendment to the by-laws.

The Board proposes the following amendment to Article 8:

New board members will take office ~~on~~ ~~July 1~~ *at the June meeting* of the year in which they are elected.

## 99 Counties Join IACEC for 2006 - 2007



A big “thank you” to all the counties that joined IACEC this year. We have 99 extension districts who are members this year. With your support we are able to provide legislative advocacy, share county concerns with Extension Administration, and network with each other to help solve local problems and meet the needs of Iowa’s citizens.

## From the President...

Where has the year gone? I cannot believe we are already in the month of February. First of all, I would like to express my thanks for all the work our council members and IACEC board members have done over the past year. We have enjoyed great support from our county councils with 99 out of 100 counties joining IACEC.



IACEC President  
Gary Smith

County Extension Councils also worked hard before the elections this fall. The extension referendum was on the ballot in 15 county districts and ended up being passed in 10... great job! We still face funding challenges as we have in the past. I think this makes our organization even more relevant to our members as we work to educate them on the funding issues.

With this in mind, I would like to remind everyone of the IACEC Legislative Day on March 14. We will be meeting at the Botanical Center and riding a shuttle bus to the Capitol...no more cold walks! I am confident it will be convenient for all who participate.

One other activity to look forward to this spring is the cluster meetings that will be held across the various extension areas. This will hopefully be an educational opportunity for new council members and liaisons to acquaint them with their IACEC representatives and extension policy in general. Please try to attend, especially if you are new to your county council.

I have really enjoyed the interaction we have had as a board this past year. Our marketing committee came up with a wonderful mini-grant

program to encourage fresh thinking on programming, and we had great participation.

In closing I would again like to thank everyone for their participation this past year on the IACEC board and on county councils. With the leadership of Jack Payne and dedicated members like yourselves, I am confident that ISU Extension will remain a shining example of what extension should be. I am always amazed at the dedication our extension staff exhibits in spite of the funding challenges to which we have had to adjust.

I consider it an honor to have served as your IACEC President this past year. I would like to close with a saying that keeps me focused when I feel too busy: "We make a living with what we get, but we make a life with what we give." Thanks for a great year!

*Gary J. Smith*

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