



NE Iowa Youth Attend Boston FFI Conference



July 2009 — Nine Northeast Iowa residents, including five high school youth, attended a youth planning retreat for Food & Fitness in Boston, Mass.

The conference was organized by the Youth Engagement Associates with the WK Kellogg Foundation to allow five of the nine Food & Fitness community cooperatives the opportunity for cross-site learning.

The Boston conference also allowed groups from different regions of the country to work collaboratively on responses to upcoming national congressional decisions.

“It was an opportunity to prepare advocacy efforts on state and national levels around the Child Nutrition Re-Authorization Act and the Transportation Act,” said Lynette Anderson, Youth Engagement Coordinator with the NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative.



The conference served as a catalyst for youth to narrow their focus on the national Food & Fitness Initiative. Participants

attended educational sessions and discussed how youth are currently working on creating healthy school environments related to food and fitness, as well as how they would like to be involved.

“In these sessions, Youth Engagement Associates and local trainers facilitated skill-building activities, learning exchanges and planning sessions to help shape and support each community’s efforts to establish, sustain and grow effective youth engagement work during the implementation phase of the Food & Fitness Initiative,” Anderson said. “The youth who are engaged in this effort understand the need for change to create healthy and vibrant communities.”

“I think it was important to see how others solve the same problems that we’re working on solving,”

- Liz Dovenberg, Student at Decorah High School

The upcoming school year will be a chance for these youth to take the FFI further into schools. “I see us working with the schools even more than we have been and getting healthy foods in the school lunches and concession stands,” Dovenberg said. “Also, educating elementary school kids about eating healthy and being physically active.”

Youth are vital to the work of Food & Fitness. They offer new and profound perspectives on how to improve our food and fitness environments.



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension