

# FFI Regional Impacts

2016



The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative works in six rural counties in Northeast Iowa (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek) to improve the health and well-being of children and families in the region. Countless individuals and organizations work together to increase access to healthy, local foods and opportunities for play through four strategies—K-12 Schools, Early Childhood, Local Food, and Safe Routes to School—while engaging youth in all strategies. This report share the highlights of FFI’s impacts in 2016.

## Youth Engagement

- FFI engaged 148 youth through 15 FFI Youth 4-H Teams in 2015-16.
- 83 youth leaders participated in planning, advocating, and implementing active transportation activities in 2016, holding steady when compared to 2014 and 2015.
- 535 students received local foods and nutrition education through cross-age teaching at six schools, where high school youth teach elementary students.
- Four schools had cafeteria coach teams.
- 3 youth participated in the National 4-H Healthy Living Summit in Washington, DC, where they presented about Cafeteria Coaching (see photo below).
- Three FEEST teams met regularly in 2015-16 to cook healthy meals using local ingredients without recipes.



## FFI Impacts on K-12 Schools and Early Childhood

In 2016, the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative placed eight FFI Resource Contacts (AmeriCorps and FoodCorps Service Members) in 9 schools and worked with 60 early childhood classrooms.

### FFI’s Farm to Preschool program expanded both in Northeast Iowa and statewide:

- The Farm to Preschool (F2PS) program was implemented in 16 new classrooms, for a total of 60, reaching an estimated 1,200 children.
- 528 early childhood care providers received training from FFI to promote wellness and engage parents, including an estimated 250 from other parts of the state.
- FFI received a FoodCorps member who is working exclusively in Early Childhood settings during the 2016-17 school year. This is a first both for FFI and FoodCorps.

### FFI continues to work deeply in schools:

- Nine schools contributed to a the stipend to have an FFI Resource Contact in their school in 2015-16.

- FFI Resource Contacts gave 672 hours of nutrition and local food programming in schools and communities.
- Two schools updated their wellness policies in the 2015-16 school year: MFL Mar Mac overhauled their wellness policy and St. Joseph added a policy regarding healthy snacks offered during school and sold as fundraisers.

### FFI’s Safe Routes to School Program expanded in 2015-16:

- A total of 32 Walking and Biking School Bus routes walked/ biked a total of 363 hours during the school year in 14 communities, involving 275 students and 75 adults.
- 20 Bike Rodeos were held, involving 1990 students. 700 bike helmets were given out.
- A new SRTS liaison position was created by Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments and the Iowa Bicycle Coalition to expand SRTS to Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler and Grundy Counties. FFI’s SRTS Liaison is mentoring the person in this new position.

*“[I learned] if a kid under age two gets a lot of sugar that is what they’ll want as they get older. So I thought, ‘Let’s take Farm to Preschool building wide!’”*  
-Daycare director and preschool teacher

## FFI Organizes Systems Leaders

To create systems to support healthy lifestyles in Northeast Iowa, FFI works with partners representing multiple sectors to agree to common goals and align their activities to reach them. As part of that strategy, **FFI convened three new learning communities in 2016:**

- FFI’s School Outreach Coordinator organized a year-long **Systems Leaders Learning Community**. Ten school champions, along with all of the FFI Resource Contacts participated to improve systems leadership skills and collaboratively develop a project that would move school wellness forward within their district.
- FFI held a three-day workshop called **Leadership in Community Health Innovation**. Twenty-three leaders from seven communities came away with a Communi-

ty Action Plan and continued to participate in a learning community via monthly teleconference calls where they share ideas and support one another in their endeavors. FFI’s project director has worked in follow up with 5 teams to facilitate workshops to create a shared vision for health and well-being in their respective communities.

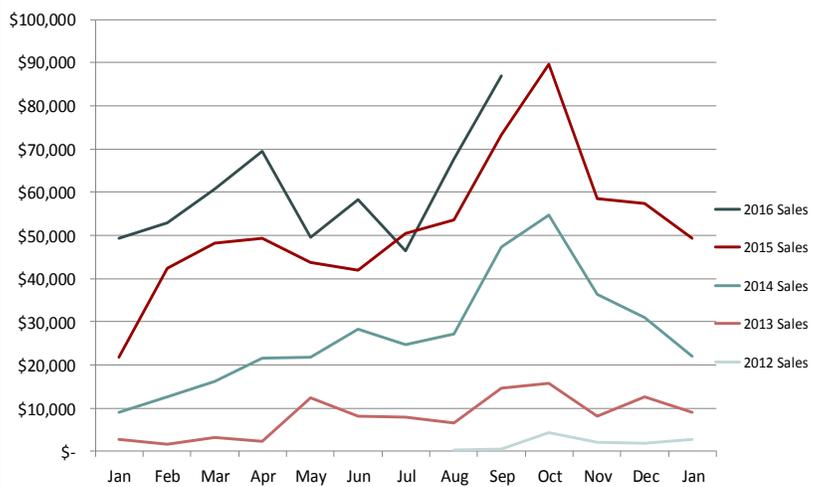
- FFI is convening **Community Health Stakeholder Workshops** for community hospitals and public health departments in Northeast Iowa. Together they created the first-ever regional Health Improvement Plan, which includes a focus on promoting walking and walkability and healthy eating (fruit and vegetable consumption).

## Economic Impact of Local Food

The FFI is working to create a local food system that supports small- and mid-sized farmers while providing healthy local food to everyone, including Northeast Iowa's most vulnerable residents. Evidence of this includes:

- **School purchases of local food remained high in 2015-16, with 14 schools spending a total of \$63,438.**
- **Local food sales reported by farmers increased 16% from \$2.2 million in 2014 to \$2.58 million in 2015.**
- 10 new local food producers began selling food to local markets in 2015.
- A new 4-H greenhouse club was formed near West Union when a local farmer offered his greenhouse to use as an educational farm.
- **9 jobs were created** by farms businesses and institutions as a result of producing, processing, or utilizing local foods in 2015. Seven of those jobs were full-time jobs.
- The Iowa Food Hub (IFH), a non-profit food hub that emerged out of the NIFF Coalition and the FFI, continues to aggregate and distribute foods produced in Northeast Iowa, lessening the effects of poverty. Accomplishments in 2016 include:
  - In 2015, IFH purchased \$508,439 from local farmers and **reached the milestone of purchasing a total of \$1 million from farmers since its start.**
  - As of July 2016, a total of 67 farmers or farmers groups were

Iowa Food Hub Annual Sales By Month, 2012-2016



The Iowa Food Hub was started by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach as an FFI partner. Every October the food hub experiences a spike in sales due to school purchases of local food for Farm to School Month.

selling products to the IFH.

- The IFH started a new “node” in the Dubuque area in 2016. They are working with local partners to identify key local food farmers and buyers to develop buying and selling relationships. They also converted a 10 foot trailer to a “cool-bot” trailer to serve as a temporary cold storage facility located at Sinsinawa Mound Center.

## Communities Invest in Community Work by Supporting FFI

Rather than form yet another 501(c)(3) to support FFI, we have four core partners that are the base for engaging community members in our four major strategies. These 4 core partners have a history of collaboration that's created a common agenda, shared measures, mutually reinforcing activities and constant communication. The backbone support connects these conditions to make collective, as opposed to isolated, impact for children and their families to create and sustain increased access to healthy food and physical activity opportunities.

All core partners have committed to continue their involvement and seek resources to do so. However, we have struggled to secure resources for our “backbone support.” This support is essential to transforming systems by keeping all core partners connected and aligned. Without it, the Initiative will devolve into four projects. We consider coordination, communication and evaluation to be FFI's backbone.

1. **Coordination:** The Project Coordinator convenes core partners to assure aligned implementation of the community action plan, engages community members in setting direction for FFI, and connects FFI work to other regional, state, and national initiatives to bring resources to the region.

2. **Communication:** External communication has been essential both to make residents aware of FFI, and influence their thinking about healthy eating and active living. FFI's work is reinforced by three regional message campaigns: Together We Grow Healthy Kids, the 5-2-1-0 Message, and a new campaign regarding walking and walkability. Internal communication is essential to keeping all partners connected and is often facilitated by the Project Coordinator.

3. **Evaluation:** We use shared indicators that help us know whether we are making progress and making a difference. We adjust strategies and consider new approaches based on analysis of our evaluation data. Having long-term data is also a significant advantage when we develop proposals for funding.

Please consider supporting FFI's backbone structure. To learn more visit [www.iowafoodandfitness.org](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org).

### Annual Backbone Support Budget

Coordination	\$45,000
Technical assistance	\$20,000
Communication	\$20,000
Evaluation	\$15,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative is grounded in the work of these core partners:



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach



NORTHEAST IOWA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

