



FFI Regional Impacts

2017



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 Active Living—while engaging youth in all strategies. This report shares the highlights of FFI’s impacts in 2017.

School engagement

By the numbers

- 8 Northeast Iowa school districts/parochial schools have been awarded the Healthier US Schools Challenge Award since 2012.
- 22 Walking or Biking School Buses walked/biked hours.
- 420 hours.
- 1,868 Students practiced bike safety at Bike Rodeos, and received
- 24 bike helmets.
- 628 bike helmets.
- 14 School districts and parochial schools purchased
- \$64,375 in local food.
- 7 Resource Contacts and
- 5 workgroup leaders educated children and the community about nutrition and local foods for
- 786 hours.

FFI Impacts on Early Childhood

In 2017, FFI’s Farm to Early Care and Education (F2ECE) program expanded greatly.

- A total of 70 early childhood settings implemented F2ECE in Northeast Iowa in 2017, up from 60 in 2016.
- A FoodCorps member worked exclusively in early childhood settings in Northeast Iowa, a first for FoodCorps nationally.
- A total of 272 meals were prepared at home by Head Start families using F2ECE recipes as a new in-kind activity.
- A local snack program was piloted with three northeast Iowa early childhood providers and the Iowa Food Hub.

- FFI hired the first Fayette County Farm to Early Education Associate, to support F2ECE efforts.
- F2ECE was implemented for the first time by in-home daycare providers.

With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, FFI is working with the Iowa Association for the Education of

Young Children to expand their F2ECE collaboration, programming, and professional development statewide:

- 32 early childhood settings piloted the F2ECE program during the summer and fall of 2017.
- 22 individuals have joined the Iowa F2ECE coalition.
- 615 early childhood professionals in Northeast Iowa and around the state received capacity-building training to promote wellness and engage parents.

“[As a result of the F2ECE expansion] I’m more intentional in how we can make our experiences with F2ECE transformational.”

~Early childhood professional

With support from the Robert and Ruth Walker Foundation, FFI deepened the F2ECE program in Fayette County:

FFI empowers collaboration to promote Walking/Walkability

FFI’s Active Living strategy has partnered to create a total of 51 Walking and Biking School Bus Routes since 2011. Today they are expanding their work to help communities include active living in community planning and infrastructure.

FFI organizes a collaboration of 32 community health stakeholders, which includes FFI’s 4 core partners and fiscal agent, 8 hospitals, 5 public health departments, 10 school districts, 2 colleges, and 2 early childhood organizations, to address a regional Community Health Needs Assessment. Their top health priorities are obesity, physical inactivity and mental health; a messaging campaign for walking responds to all of these. They launched the Walk More Connect More Northeast Iowa campaign in April 2017:

- Their website www.walkneiowa.org offers resources

for communities, including 66 walking maps for 24 Northeast Iowa towns, information on the benefits of walking, how to start a walking initiative, and more.

- Over 500 people follow the campaign on Facebook, and over 150 people follow it on Instagram.
- FFI has inspired community leaders from West Union to form an active living collaboration, resulting in:
 - 60 to 80 children walk to school daily with three WSBs, up from 12 to 20 children in 2013.
 - The local hospital allows employees to volunteer during work time; as a result, the hospital supplies about half of the adult WSB volunteers.
 - The city passed a cost-share policy to help home owners and businesses replace broken sidewalks.



Impact of Local Food

FFI works to increase access to local foods for a myriad of reasons, including to boost the local economy; increase access to healthy foods for low-income, rural residents; and help children develop a preference for healthy, local foods. In 2017, FFI and its partners accomplished the following:

Economic impact:

- The Iowa Food Hub purchased \$586,772 in goods from over 60 local farmers, farm groups and farm businesses in 2016.
- Northeast Iowa institutions, including local schools, purchased over \$2.3 million in local foods in 2016.
- The Iowa Food Hub partnered with county Cattlemen Associations to serve locally raised beef in five school districts in 2016.

Equity impact:

- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach started a beginning farmer network in Northeast Iowa in 2017. Meetings are hosted by a different beginning farmer each month. So far, 84 unique individuals have participated.
- In 2016 the IFH expanded its food box program to rural Northeast Iowa communities. By 2017, they had 10 delivery sites in FFI's six-county region.
- The IFH launched a local food fundraiser program for schools and community groups, as a way to raise funds for local community



The Northeast Iowa Beginning Farmer Network learns about caterpillar tunnels during a gathering at Low Oaks Farm. The network is facilitated by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach as a FFI Core Partner.

efforts while supporting local farmers and offering healthy food choices.

- In 2017, FFI and partners facilitated a strategic planning session to create a 10-year local food system plan. Over 60 stakeholders participated in planning sessions.

Seeds we've sown...

FFI has been sowing seeds for 10 years. Some of them never sprout; some grow, but die out. But a few seeds sprout, grow and mature. Some take on a life of their own.

The Iowa Food Hub has purchased over \$1.5 million from farmers since 2012.

FFI and the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children build professional capacity and expand the F2ECE program statewide.

Young adults return to the region to find careers supporting healthier communities.

Schools take greater responsibility with AmeriCorps and FoodCorps service members, while FFI provides capacity building and training.

Communities move beyond active living programming in schools and early childhood to include regional promotion of walking/walkability by community health stakeholders.

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

