

Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative has helped to:

- Increase the number of producers and sales of local food to over \$7.3 million in 2012.
- Increase sales of local, healthy foods to schools. When we began, only isolated local farmers were selling to schools; in the past year that number increased to 21 local farmers.
- Establish active school wellness teams in 18 of 20 public and private school districts throughout the region.
- Increase opportunities for active living throughout the school day. In 2009, we established Safe Routes to School programs in six pilot schools. By the 2012-2013 school year, 19 public and private school districts participated in Safe Routes to School activities..
- Establish 16 youth leadership teams focused on food and fitness. Having youth engaged in leading changes in their schools and communities to support their own health benefits them as individuals, provides role models for same-age and younger peers, and is the most effective voice for implementing new policies and practices.

How is FFI Funded?

Over the past six years, FFI has been supported by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Community Program. Kellogg recently announced a \$900,000 grant to cover FFI's work in six counties and 18 school districts over the next four years.

Kellogg is slowly phasing out this support; next year's funding will be \$100,000 less than this year's. To continue FFI's success, increased community support is essential.

FFI is moving into a new phase of our work, and we need your help. We are looking for community support for community work. This is the only sustainable source of funding.

When our kids eat well and are active, they thrive.



FFI in the Schools: A Healthy Place to Learn

FFI has helped schools bring wellness policies to life with everything from teacher workshops and direct nutrition education to offering support for food service staff, planting gardens, planning activities throughout the day to increase physical activity and assisting schools to secure mini-grant funds for wellness projects.

One way FFI helps schools is by providing outreach through Luther College Center for Sustainable Communities with FoodCorps and AmeriCorps service members known as Resource Contacts (RCs). RCs offer the school wellness team leadership and the encouragement to try new things.

Early Childhood: Early Success

Children form their life habits early. To achieve long-term success, we must work with parents and childcare providers to help children establish healthy habits at a young age—and then ensure that school policies and practices are in alignment with those already-established habits.

In the fall of 2012, Northeast Iowa Community College made a commitment to partner with FFI to create leadership for this effort on campus and in regional early childhood care environments. Initial engagement efforts have focused on families enrolled in WIC and Head Start, where we can reach our most vulnerable children and also begin to engage diverse community members in advocating for and leading on behalf of their children.

Youth: Leading the Way

Through 16 district-wide teams, over 200 high school and middle school youth advocate for healthier food options in schools, gather to learn new cooking and gardening skills, deliver health education to younger students, and develop their leadership role in the healthy communities movement.

Positive youth-adult partnerships strengthen the work, inspire action and create relationships that are sustainable and supported. The FFI teams are part of the Iowa 4-H youth development program lead by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.



Walking School Buses: An Active Solution

With more than a third of all kids in the U.S. at risk for diabetes or other lifestyle-related health problems, FFI made “walking school buses” the centerpiece of its Safe Routes to School program. The result is an easy and fun opportunity for adults and kids to get more exercise while building community.

A walking school bus is comprised of students walking together to school with supervised and trained adults. During the 2012-13 school year, 15 walking school buses helped nearly 200 Northeast Iowa kids get to school safely while improving their health, attentiveness and academic performance.

To increase the number of routes, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission's Safe Routes to School Liaison helped facilitate “walkability” studies throughout Northeast Iowa. These studies engaged schools and community members to analyze the condition of sidewalks, traffic and other walkability factors. As a result, more walking school buses will form in the future to give even more students an active boost in their day.

Local Foods: Healthy & Growing

The demand for local foods is growing and FFI is helping our region to capitalize on this opportunity. FFI supports Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in its work with the Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition (NIFF). This network connects regional producers and buyers to engage and provide outreach to existing and new producers in the local food movement.

These partnerships have been a key driver in the burgeoning local foods movement in Northeast Iowa and creating exciting results:

- Local food sales to institutions have grown exponentially in recent years, leading to over \$1.18 million in local food purchases by institutions in 2012. Luther College, with Sodexo's leadership, has reached the college's goal of buying over a third of all food served on campus from local producers.
- Between 2008 and 2012, 38 food system-related jobs were created and 39 new local food producers/enterprises were started in the region.
- Farmers are reporting increasing sales. In 2012, 24 farms (or farm groups) reported \$7.3 million in sales.

There is still plenty to be done, including learning how to successfully expand production, ensure food safety and develop strategies for regional aggregation and distribution.



\$5.4 million

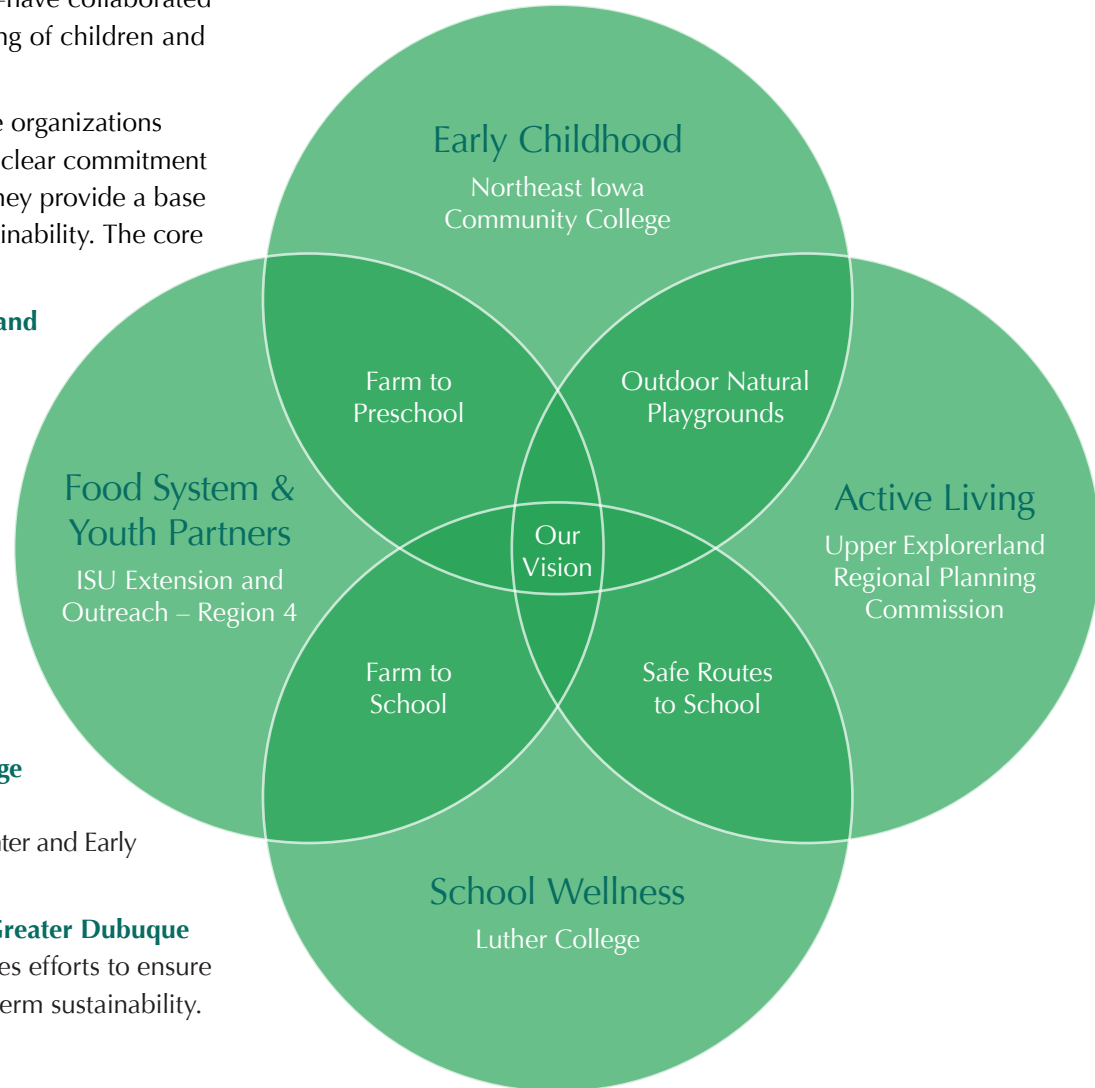
Purchases of local food by Northeast Iowa institutions between 2005-2012

Core Partners, Community Roots

Over the past six years, six rural counties in Northeast Iowa—Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek—have collaborated to improve the health and well-being of children and their families through FFI.

FFI's institutional "core partners" are organizations with deep roots in the region and a clear commitment to our kids and our communities. They provide a base for FFI's work and are building sustainability. The core partners include:

- **Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – Region 4** coordinates work on food systems and youth development.
- **Luther College** oversees work in schools through its Center for Sustainable Communities.
- **Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission** supports active living by running the rural Safe Routes to School program.
- **Northeast Iowa Community College** facilitates early childhood initiatives through its Child Development Center and Early Childhood Education Department.
- **The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque** is the fiscal agent for FFI and guides efforts to ensure community investment and long-term sustainability.



To support the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative or to learn more about our work, contact:

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Society faces a twin epidemic of physical inactivity and poor nutrition. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents has almost tripled since 1980.

Our children's health is directly linked to the quality of food they eat and the environments in which they grow and play. When our kids eat well and are active, they thrive.

Creating access to healthy food and places for physical activity also strengthens communities, reinvigorates local economies, reduces health care costs and addresses historical inequalities that prevent all children from reaching their full potential.

The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI) is a collaborative of community members and organizations working together to increase access to healthy, locally grown foods and active living opportunities in Northeast Iowa. FFI serves more than 100,000 people across six counties.

The FFI Vision

- A rebirth of rural communities led by schools, young people and their communities to promote healthy living.
- Children get a healthy start from birth and come to school ready to learn.
- An economically vibrant and growing regional food system.
- Opportunities for people of all ages to walk, bike and enjoy nature and small towns.
- A culture of health and well-being created by the collaboration and leadership of Northeast Iowans of every income, age, ethnicity, race, education and walk of life.