



## FOOD & FITNESS NEWS

Winter 2014

### Putting Pencil to Paper

By Laura Liechty, Youth & Nutrition Coordinator

In October, 25 youth from across the region gathered for the Regional Youth Leadership Team training. The students were asked to take a closer look into their community's needs in relation to the access of healthy eating and active living. The students "mapped" these resources for their districts and then analyzed health assessment data to determine the most pertinent needs of their community.

After identifying issues, the students brainstormed ways their Food & Fitness teams could address these problems. Adult leaders sat in listening to their students' ideas and helped facilitate discussions. It was a successful day of leadership building and project development.

The next RYLT training is this winter, where teams will announce the projects their teams foresee implementing this year.

As exciting as it is to see the youth expand their ideas for new solutions to the health issues in their respective school districts and communities, it is encouraging to also hear of more schools interested in getting 4-H Food & Fitness Teams started in their districts. Many school districts with existing teams have the capacity and interest in implementing an additional team in either the middle school or high school. The progression of team expansion across grade levels is a positive sign for sustainability and creates longevity for student involvement.

#GIVINGTUESDAY  
DECEMBER 2, 2014

Greetings of the harvest season,

As the early snow pushes us toward the new year, we welcome our Thanksgiving season. In this issue of your Food & Fitness News, we celebrate seeds that have been sown and are now touching lives for good in your community.

We are humbled to be partners in the work of growing strong healthy communities through endowment building, grant-making and supporting community leadership through convening and collaboration.

We remind you that Endow Iowa 25% tax credits are still available for 2014 gifts that you make to Foundation endowments including the NE Iowa Food & Fitness Endowed Fund. Please be intentional as your year-end charitable thoughts take shape, because the credits have run out in December the last two years.

As you think ahead to your Thanksgiving gathering and consider all your blessings, let us know how we can help you support outstanding work that touches your community forever.

In appreciation,  
MJ Smith, Director of Affiliate Foundations  
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque



Northeast Iowa FFI is grounded in the work of these core partners:  
Iowa State University Extension and Outreach—Region 4  
Luther College Center for Sustainable Communities  
Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission  
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque  
Northeast Iowa Community College

## Touring Unionland Market

By Haleisa Johnson, Early Childhood Outreach

The West Union Head Start Class recently went with the “Farmer Kids” (aka North Fayette Valley FFA Pals) to visit Unionland Feed and Market in West Union to see locally grown and processed foods for people, as well as the different types of feed for animals.

“We are always trying to come up with new and different things to do with our “Farmer Kids”, said Sara Converse, Lead Teacher at West Union Head Start. “We thought visiting Unionland Feed and Market would be a great way to incorporate all the things we love!”



“Chelsey Matthias did a fantastic job showing us around the new store and talking about all the different foods and the places in Iowa that they come from. The students enjoyed seeing all the different feed for different animals. We also brought back some fresh ice cream to taste. The kids loved it!” said Converse.

Two of the young students from Head Start shared their thoughts of the field trip visit. “My favorite was ice cream!” said Chloe Sparrgrove.

“I liked the big garage where all the animal food is,” noted Kayleigh Stewart.

This experience illustrates the wonderful connections between the NE Iowa Food & Fitness strategies —Farm to Preschool, Youth Engagement and the Local Food System.



## Iowa Food Hub Finds New Home

By Teresa Wiemerslage, Food Systems Coordinator

There is a new business coming to downtown West Union. The Iowa Food Hub has signed a lease with Unionland Feed to use the commercial space in the west side of their new building to be the base of operations for their community local food distribution business.

Launched in 2012, the Iowa Food Hub (IFH) is a project of the 501c3 nonprofit, Allamakee New Beginnings (ANB). This innovative program connects families to farmers and food grown close to home.

What started as several small pilot projects renting cooler space at a grocery store in Decorah, has grown into a food distribution business helping over 50 northeast Iowa farms connect to markets and buyers within a 150 mile radius. IFH does over \$30,000 of sales a month.

The food hub had been looking for its own location for almost a year when they learned about the space available at Unionland.

“We had outgrown our current space. We were looking for commercial property to rent where we could install refrigeration and cooler space,” said Nick Mabe, IFH Coordinator. “The area needed to have a loading dock and be certifiable as a food warehouse.”

The partnership with Unionland Feed store seems like a perfect fit.

The old Unionland Feed store burned to the ground in November 2013, and the new store is now open for business. Father and son owners Gary and Justin Steinlage are turning the front part of the building that houses the retail area into Unionland Market. As such, it will offer a wide selection of locally produced foods, plus more (see story to the left).

Before the fire, local food accounted for roughly 30 percent of Unionland’s annual sales.

An outgrowth of the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative, IFH unites the mission of its partners by managing the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of locally-produced food products to grocery stores, schools and food service.

“We connect farmers to markets,” said Mabe. “The food hub is not a retail business. Rather, we provide the infrastructure to connect public and private schools, hospitals, universities, grocery stores and workplaces to good food grown by our region’s farmers.”



## Creating Deep, Lasting, Equitable Change in Communities

By Ann Mansfield, Project Director

We've had the opportunity to participate in a national conversation regarding ways that communities and funders work together to create lasting change in conditions to support improved health and well-being for community members. The creation of lasting and true change is dependent on all individuals having equal opportunity to achieve their full potential with regards to health, education, employment, quality of life, etc. We know that not everyone in NE Iowa has an equal opportunity to achieve this potential.

Equitable access to healthy choices has been core of the journey with W.K. Kellogg Foundation as a major funding partner over the last 8 years. We've focused our attention and learning on changing the conditions for vulnerable children and their families. We've engaged community stakeholders and developed action plans to increase access to local healthy food and physical activity with priority emphasis in low income, underserved communities... places where there is not equal opportunity for the healthy food and/or physical activity choice.

We are making progress towards the changes we wish to see in our food system, schools, early childhood settings, physical activity environments and communities. However, we realize that the work is far from over. We need to find ways to sustain and deepen the momentum to achieve the BIG results we seek in partnership with communities. This requires that we ensure that fairness, inclusion, democracy, accountability, transparency and humility are integrated in everything we do. It will require an ongoing, strong commitment to making sure that those without equal opportunity - have a voice in defining their vision for a healthy future.



## Keeping Up

By Ashley Christensen, Safe Routes to School Liaison

North Fayette Valley is definitely an active school district, and we are just trying to keep up!

The school district has walking school buses traveling through various neighborhoods and dozens of other students walking and biking to and from school independently. Every morning in West Union looks like a parade of people heading up the hill to the school buildings. Even now with the chilly mornings, the number of walkers and bikers hasn't dwindled. Every time I have the chance to greet the sleepy eyed kiddos out on the sidewalks, it truly warms my heart.

Valley started an after school walking school bus this fall and AmeriCorps Paige Wettach had the pleasure of volunteering to walk with a group of girls one afternoon.

The route from Valley to Clermont is a serious hike for little legs! She walked with two preschool girls and two 2nd grade girls on a beautiful Thursday in October. It took them 50 minutes to travel over two miles one way, but they made it! They created their own fun along the way, identifying insects, waving at the friendly cows, and talking to the neighborhood horses. Those little girls are troopers!

## Join the 2015 Bike Rack Challenge

The Bike Rack Challenge encourages biking to school and other community destinations through youth creativity, skill and leadership. Each spring, high school industrial technology classes are challenged to construct a usable bike rack for their school or other community location using as much recycled material as possible. Classes have from January until May to design and construct their bike rack. Entry forms for this year's challenge are due Dec. 19.

## Continued Investment in Innovation

Increased Capacity Resulting from Recent Funding

### Rural Grocery Store Pilot Launched

The United States of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced the awards for the Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). One of the grants was awarded to Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission in partnership with the Iowa Food Hub.

Iowa Food Hub (IFH) will receive \$88,000 to implement a regional branding campaign to further increase local food recognition on rural grocery store shelves within its service area.

### Bike Rack Challenge Sponsors

The Allamakee County Community Foundation and The Depot Outlet have contributed funds to sponsor the 2015 Bike Rack Challenge for high school industrial technology classes.

### Windhorst Joins Iowa Food Hub

Georgia Windhorst is joining Iowa Food Hub as a Marketing and Sales Assistant. She will be assisting with customer service, local food sales and farm to school outreach.

### New Water Bottle Filling Stations at Postville

Postville school has received a \$500 grant from Team Nutrition to install four water bottle refilling stations.

### Local Donations Make These Investments Possible

FFI has a successful record for grant funding. The KEY to this success is the **local investment by the community** through donations and matching funds. Contributions to FFI will be **highly leveraged** for maximum impact. Consider a gift to FFI this season.

## Stay Connected with Food & Fitness!

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## Greenhouse Blues

By Ashley Turk, FoodCorp, Allamakee Schools

If you looked at my Google search history, you would think I am a very confused gardener. Recent searches include: “tomato plant pruning” and “recipes with fresh basil”. Who worries about gardening when the temperature outside drops below ten degrees? People who teach students in a greenhouse, that’s who!

Once a month, seventh grade science students visit the space, caring for the vegetables and learning about food production and personal health along the way. To date, our basil and parsley plants are flourishing! Our tomatoes, however, have yet to bear any fruit, and it’s too soon to tell if they will. One of the hardest parts of gardening for me — is the uncertainty. Things often don’t turn out as planned, just like life! It’s a great study in patience.

Sadly, uncooperative tomatoes are not the only issue plaguing the greenhouse. Attendance at my after-school garden club has been dwindling. There are so many activities for junior high students to choose from after the last bell rings. From root beer brewing to automotive club, garden club had a nearly impossible time recruiting a steady stream of volunteers.



Barb Winters-Kelly gave me the fabulous idea of using elementary school students when no middle schoolers were available. The idea worked like a charm! Three girls from East Elementary had a blast working in the greenhouse. They harvested basil, snipped parsley, pruned tomatoes, and watered. It was their first experience in the greenhouse, and they cannot wait to go back!