

Howard County Profile



W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Community Partner

Why Food and Fitness?

School Spotlights

Regional Health Services in Cresco shares a garden on their property with Howard Winneshiek CSD.



The Howard-Winneshiek FFI Youth 4-H team participates in cross-age teaching. Twenty high school students taught nutrition lessons during the year to 200 elementary students. Children learned about melons, beef, broccoli, dry beans, and milk.



The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) is a six-county effort dedicated to creating healthy places where all children and families can thrive. We are working to increase access to affordable, healthy, locally grown food and opportunities for physical activity and play for all. FFI is one of nine Food & Fitness collaboratives supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Community Program.

Obesity is a growing problem all over the United States. Obesity has been linked to chronic diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and some cancers. In fact, a study published in 2012 estimates annual obesity-attributable expenditures in Iowa to be \$1.435 billion¹. It is estimated that obesity and related diseases cause an annual loss of productivity in the U.S. worth \$73.1 billion². In contrast, there is “irrefutable evidence” that physical activity is effective at protecting against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and

osteoporosis³. Similarly, high fruit and vegetable consumption is linked with lower incidence of cancer, stroke, and heart disease.

Experts agree the best chance of reversing obesity trends include community interventions to change environments and policies. Communities can create a culture where the healthy choice is the easy choice—making healthy food, and space and time for exercise readily available.

To make this a reality, FFI works in three areas: **school wellness**, the **local food economy**, and **active living**. This report highlights FFI's achievements in Howard County in these three areas.

¹ Trogdon, J.G., et al. (2012) State- and Payer- Specific Estimates of Annual Medical Expenditures Attributable to Obesity. *Obesity*. 20, 214-220

² Finkelstein, E.A., et al. “The Cost of Obesity in the Workplace.” *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 52(10): 971-976, 2010.

³ Warburton, D.E.R., et al. (2006). Health benefits of physical activity: The evidence. *CMAJ*, 174(6), 801-809.

Howard County Food and Fitness By the Numbers...

62.2% of adults in Howard County are overweight or obese.

2 in 5 Iowa children are overweight or obese
(2011 Iowa Youth BMI Survey)

\$18,529 awarded to Howard County Schools for wellness activities, school gardens, and food service

\$1,653 spent by Howard Winneshiek school food service on local foods in 2011-12

671 pounds of vegetables harvested from the Howard Winneshiek Community School garden in fall 2011

35% of 4-H members in Howard County are members of the two school-based FFI Youth 4-H Teams

77 individuals from Howard County and **651** statewide partners are connected to FFI's work

\$2.7 million leveraged for FFI-related work in Northeast Iowa

For more information visit www.iowafoodandfitness.org

An FFI mini-grant was used to install a frisbee golf course on Riceville School grounds.

Active Living Spotlights

Elma Elementary School saw an increase in the percentage of trips students made to and from school from 11% in 2008 to 21% in 2012.

Luther College students created a map of Cresco assessing signs, sidewalks, lights, crosswalks, and curb cuts to determine how to improve the environment for kids to walk and bike to school. The map was shared at a parent night and at Howard Winneshiek School Wellness Team meetings.



Riceville Community School Builds Wildcat Trail

Iowa Senator Mary Jo Wilhelm joined Riceville students for International Walk to School Day to celebrate the completion of Riceville CSD's Wildcat Trail. The days started as students gathered at the Methodist Church and walked to school with adult and crossing guard supervision.

Once at school, students and teachers gathered for a dedication ceremony at the head of the newly paved Wildcat Trail, which meanders through school property.

Sidewalk contractors held a ribbon across the path as Senator Wilhelm performed the cutting. After the ceremony, students and teachers walked an inaugural lap on the trail before heading to classes.

The Wildcat Trail was installed because of the school's commitment to healthy living. Students track their walking record along the trail. Art students painted paw prints lining the trail.

To commemorate the event, student participants were given a certificate of completion of

International Walk to School Day, a fitness-themed coloring book, and Wildcat Trail bookmarks.

Elaine Govern, member of the school wellness team, organized this event, and is also involved with the school's "Walking Wednesdays" program. On the first Wednesday of each month, students are dropped off at the Methodist Church and walk to school. All students participate in Walking Wednesday unless their parents send a note requesting they be excused.



NE Iowa Food & Farm Coalition Mini-grants Support Local Food Enterprises

The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition Producer Mini-grants awarded \$4,060.50 to support local food businesses and enterprises in Howard County between 2008 and 2012 supplementing a total of \$23,328 leveraged. Items purchased include marketing materials for a local water bottling company, farmers market signs, vineyard trellising, hydroponics in a school greenhouse, storage at a school garden, and equipment for a packing house.

Farmers Markets Combine Economic Development, Activity and Local Food

The Riceville Farmers Market was built to enhance use of the Wapsi Great Western Line Trail, a paved trail that travels north of Riceville starting two blocks away from the market location. Organizers expect the market to draw trail users to Riceville's downtown.

Funds raised in the community and several matching grants were used to start the market in 2011. \$44,000 was used to purchase land and install a retaining wall, sidewalk, and several frames under which vendors set up their booths. The market has nine regular vendors. Products sold at the market include produce, baked goods, honey, jam,



and eggs. Vendors also take orders for chicken, beef, pork, and firewood.

In a unique partnership, the local food pantry distributes coupons to clients so they can purchase produce at the Riceville farmers' market. The coupons are financed through the Northeast Iowa Funders Network and area community foundations.

Local Food Economy Spotlights

Three Howard County meat processors are a part of the Northeast Iowa Meat Processors Network. The group meets quarterly to discuss meat topics, especially common problems that they can work together to solve, such as human resources and lack of capacity during busy seasons. Members also receive individual help in marketing and business planning from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Business Specialist Nick McCann.

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



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

