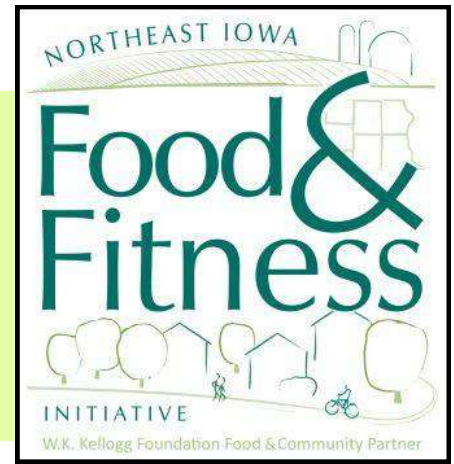


FOOD & FITNESS NEWS

FALL 2014



The Beginning of a New Relationship

Ten Northeast Iowa K-12 schools have agreed to cover the financial cost of an AmeriCorps or Food Corps service member to work at their school as an FFI Resource Contact (RC) starting in the 2014-15 school year.

Schools will make an investment of \$5,000 a year for a full-time RC or \$2,500 for a part-time RC as part of a larger effort to ensure FFI's work in the community is sustainable.

The continued partnership helps schools with their commitment to nurture healthy students.

"Educating the whole child is part of our mission statement. Your health is key to who you are," says Amy Kloberdanz, a 5th-6th grade teacher at St. Joseph Community School in New Hampton.

Kloberdanz says FFI has made their school more active, helped students to be open to eating healthy foods, and given youth opportunities for leadership. "It's been wonderful for our school and sets us apart."

At Central Community schools in Elkader, they are moving toward more project-based learning where students learn about multiple subjects through hands-on projects. For example, the school garden can be a place where students learn



Full-time FFI RC

Allamakee
Central
Decorah/St. Benedicts
North Fayette Valley
Postville

Half-time FFI RC

North Winneshiek
Clayton Ridge
Turkey Valley
St. Joseph (N. Hampton)

"responsibility, math skills, working together skills and healthy eating skills," says Vicki Carolan, school nurse.

It helps to have one person working in the school who can give undivided attention to wellness programming.

"It takes the burden off the teacher with everything else we do in the classroom," says Robyn Vsetecka, fourth grade teacher and garden coordinator at Turkey Valley Community School District.

Because of these schools' strong commitments to health, it wasn't difficult to muster support to continue having an RC. All interviewees agreed that administrators and the school board value food and fitness and want to see the work started in their schools continue.

"The principal is one hundred percent behind food and fitness. There is no resistance, because they see the value of the program," says Kloberdanz.

FFI will assist schools with a funding plan for their service member. Grants, sponsorships and community donations will be explored.

The overall sentiment from participating schools is that the RCs' work in the school far exceeds the value of the monetary contribution. "Where else can you get a quality person for \$5,000? This is a no-brainer," said Carolan.



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

NEW FACES @ SCHOOL

There are some new faces in school cafeterias and gardens this year. Eight young women have joined the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative as resource contacts for area school districts.

Resource contacts link FFI and school wellness outreach with twenty school districts. Members assist the school wellness teams as they work together to deepen student, teacher and staff understanding about the benefits of growing and consuming local, healthy food and being physically active.

The Food & Fitness family extends a warm welcome to these new members!

Ashley Dress - dresas01@luther.edu

Serving Postville Community Schools

I'm from Carmel, Indiana. I studied at Indiana University, graduating in 2008 with a B. A. in journalism. I'm excited to serve in schools with the NE Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative again because I love connecting kids to healthy foods through gardening and hands-on education.

Returning
Members



Ashley Turk - turkas01@luther.edu

Serving Allamakee Community Schools

I was born and raised in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago and attended the University of Illinois, majoring in Psychology. After graduating I spent time working in an urban school in Kansas City, MO. My experiences in the school cafeteria led me to believe that all children deserve access to wholesome, real food.

Paige Wettach - wettpa01@luther.edu

Serving North Fayette Valley Schools

A native of Decorah, I received my BA from Luther College in Communication Studies. I love children and am very excited to share information with them about living a healthy lifestyle and making good choices!



Megan Woodward - woodme01@luther.edu

Serving Decorah Community Schools

I am originally from South Eastern Wisconsin and have a degree in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies from UW-La Crosse. I am so excited to pick up where I left off last year teaching lessons in K-1 classrooms, as well as managing their school garden. I can't wait to see what fun new experiences the year will bring!



Katie Blocker - blocka02@luther.edu

Serving Turkey Valley & St. Joseph's, New Hampton

Hello! My name is Katie and I am from Waukon, IA. I graduated from Luther College this past May with a double major in Biology and Psychology. I swam for 4 years on Luther's swim and dive team. I am excited to start working in the schools, teaching kids about eating healthy and making exercise and activity fun and exciting!

New
Members



Cassie Panther pantca01@luther.edu

Serving Central
Community Schools

I have a BS in Biology and a BA in Spanish from Iowa State University. I realized my love for teaching after spending a summer in Ecuador running an after school program in a rural village. Now with AmeriCorps, I want to combine my passion for farming as well as teaching children about the goodness of growing and cooking your own food.



Molly Schintler - schimo01@luther.edu

Serving Oelwein Community Schools

I am a graduate of the University of Iowa with double majors in Theatre Arts and International Studies. After college, I toured North America planning and hosting farm dinners in 37 states and Canada, spent a season as a farm apprentice, and managed a community garden project growing local, organic produce for the Johnson County Crisis Center. I am excited to help cultivate healthy communities in Northeast Iowa.



Katrina Underwood - undeka02@luther.edu

Serving N. Winn and Clayton Ridge Community Schools

Hi! My name is Katrina Underwood. My friends call me Kat. I grew up in a suburb of Chicago and graduated from University of Illinois-UC. For the last few years I have been working on a series of different gardens and farms in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey and Michigan. I am convinced that increasing food and nutrition education is essential to creating sustainable healthier and happier communities.

Youth Food & Fitness Survey

By Laura Liechty, Youth & Nutrition Coordinator

Students active in the Regional Youth Leadership Team, Cafeteria Coaching or Farm to School Cross-Age Teaching completed surveys at the end of the school year reflecting on their experiences during the 2013-2014 year. The survey questions addressed the progress students saw being made and what they learned.

The Regional Youth Leadership Team (RYLT) is made up of students from every FFI youth team. They convene four times throughout the school year to take part in leadership trainings and team building activities to use with their youth teams to better prepare them for the projects they have ahead. Outcomes from this survey showed these youth leaders felt they learned important life and job skills as they became more confident in public speaking, more thoughtful working in teams and more humble by helping their community.

The topic that seemed to resonate the most was their change in eating behavior. 63% of the students felt they learned a lot more about healthy food habits and saw themselves make healthier changes in their lifestyle choices with the hope to model that behavior for their family and friends.

The Farm to School Cross-Age Teaching program allows high school students to plan a lesson on a particular food and its nutrition and then present it to elementary classrooms. The teaching teams are assigned to present a new lesson monthly to their designated classroom throughout the school year.

Students reported their appreciation to have the opportunity to impact their schools and the young students that look up to them while becoming better leaders and building their resumes for new possibilities in future careers.

“Because of FFI, I’ve decided my future career will have something to do with nutrition and fitness,” said one student.



A Bittersweet End

By Ashley Christensen, Ssfe Routes to School Liaison

As communities in the region get back into their typical school morning routines, one neighborhood in particular looks a little different these days than it has in the past.



Several years ago, a small group of families from the Flats neighborhood in Decorah took part in a six-week Walking School Bus pilot project proposed by the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative. The six-week time period came and went, but the Walking School Bus did not. The group just kept on walking to school, even through the winter, to the tune of five years! This group had no idea that their six-week pilot project would be pioneering a Walking School Bus revolution throughout the region as well as the state.

Since the starting of the Flats Walking School Bus, 24 Walking School Bus routes have been created in nine Northeast Iowa communities, reaching over 300 students and 75 adults. Walking School Bus programs are also building in other parts of the state.

The 2014-2015 school year brings with it a stark change for the neighborhood, the community, the region and the state- the Flats Walking School Bus is not returning. For the past five years, the Flats Walking School Bus has had a constant presence in the community. While we hate to see our champion Walking School Bus retire its walking shoes, it really is a bittersweet ending.

It’s a perfect example of the ultimate goal of a Walking School Bus program. The Walking School Bus is intended to change community perceptions and surroundings so the walk to school is as safe as can be, making the Walking School Bus no longer needed. In the Flats neighborhood, parents are now comfortable with letting their children walk on their own, and the community has since made infrastructure changes to increase the safety of neighborhood walking routes.

Mission accomplished.

*Thank you, Flats Walking School Bus, for paving the pathway for a healthier, safer tomorrow for our children in Northeast Iowa and beyond!
You are our Walking School Bus heroes!*

Role Model Challenge Becomes a New Year Resolution

By Haleisa Johnson, Early Childhood Coordinator

A new (school) year resolution I mean. Recently, NE Iowa's Head Start held their staff training to begin their new 2014-15 school year. I was invited to present an update on the successful Farm to Preschool program that was implemented last year and talk about staff wellness.

Approximately 80 Northeast Iowa Community Action Early Childhood staff attended my presentation where each of them were challenged to improve their own health by becoming a better role model for the children in their classrooms and in their own lives.

For the past year, we have talked about 5-2-1-0 in the classrooms which are ideas for living a healthy active life. It is not only applies to children's health but adult's health as well.

Adults are always role models and the most important influence in children's lives. As role models, parents, teachers or caregivers need to demonstrate healthy behaviors so children have healthy attitudes about eating, being physically active and develop lifelong healthy habits. I am hoping to have several future stories to share over the next year about this challenge and can't wait to see healthier role modeling in Northeast Iowa.

Please consider taking the challenge with us and become a better role model and improve your own health. For more information about being a healthier model, visit www.iowafoodandfitness.org and click on Early Childhood under the Healthy Kids tab.

What is 5-2-1-0?

- 5 - Eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables every day
- 2 - Limit screen time to 2 hours or less per day
- 1 - Get 1 hour or more of physical activity every day
- 0 - Drink fewer sugar-sweetened beverages



Taking a 20,000 Foot View

By Teresa Wiemerslage, Food Systems Coordinator

As I was thinking about what to write about for this newsletter article, I went to the FFI blog (see green box) for some inspiration. I scrolled through the Food System stories from the past few months and a big smile spread across my face. Sometimes when you are in the middle of the work, taking a moment for a 20,000 foot view can shed some perspective.

The examples below demonstrate the system change happening across the region. I hope you'll enjoy the view, too.

- We started the 2014/15 school year with local food being delivered to schools the first day! Iowa Food Hub delivered over \$2000 of local food to schools in the first two weeks.
- The Oneota Community Food Co-op has a beautiful new teaching kitchen to educate individuals and families on healthy meal preparation and preservation.
- The LimeSprings Beef processing facility is scheduled to open in December and bring over 50 jobs to Howard County.
- The Cedar Valley Produce Auction near Elma added 30,000 square feet to their facility — an improvement that will increase produce quality.
- Six NE Iowa vegetable farms recently completed their USDA GAP certification audits.
- The Iowa Food Hub (www.iowafoodhub.com) is approaching the \$30,000 in local food sales per month milestone. The board is actively looking for a new facility for its base of operations. IFH is a non-profit working to connect people to their food.

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