



What's up with Wellness?



Maren Stumme-Diers & Elizabeth Makarewicz, FFI Resource Contacts, led a conversation about school gardens at the School Wellness Retreat held March 21, 2012 at Luther College.

March 2012



Spring has sprung!

Inside...

Highlights from *Students Taking Charge* workshop, Cross-Age teaching, Senator's visit to New Hampton, North Winner's fitness frenzy, and MORE.

PLUS updates from 17 schools

Many ingredients go into making healthy kids. Two of the most important are good food and physical activity. Most children today don't get enough of either, and the result is an increase in chronic illness, including Type II diabetes and childhood obesity.

Schools are the public tables, at which many of our children eat two or even three meals a day. By offering healthy food, such as salad bars and other fresh, local options, schools can have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of our kids.

School is also a place that children spend a good portion of their waking hours. Increasing the amount of physical activity they get while there, or through school-related events, can go a long way toward reversing the negative health trends that have become prominent in the last decade.

In Northeast Iowa, we are working together to make schools health, vibrant places that serve locally grown foods and have abundant opportunities for physical activity and play *everyday*.

There were so many updates & stories to share this month. We've added an extra two pages. Enjoy!



STUDENTS TAKE CHARGE IN ANKENY

Youth from Central of Elkader, Cresco Decorah, Riceville and West Central attended *Students Taking Charge* workshop on Friday, March, 2nd. The workshop was part of a national movement of youth to mobilize, organize, and speak out for healthy and active schools in every state. The goal was to empower youth to make their school a place where it's easy to be healthy. The FFI School Outreach Team and Lynette Houser, ISU Region 4 Youth Coordinator, chaperoned the event.



FFI Resource Contact, Melanie Stewart, & the Riceville FFI 4-H Youth Team at *Students Taking Charge*.

School Updates:

Allamakee:

- o All elementary school students are partaking in the *Live Healthy Iowa 100 Day Challenge*! A class in Waterville was even recognized by the challenge organizers for their outstanding efforts. In fact, 1445 youth are participating in Allamakee County!
- o The after-school program in Waterville will plant a garden again this summer after a successful garden last season.

Central of Elkader:

- o The FFI 4-H Youth Team has begun preparation for their annual 5K to be held in May.
- o The FFI 4-H Youth Team made and served strawberry banana smoothies at all the home basketball games this winter. The concession was wildly popular with the crowd. And the FFI 4-H Youth Team also packed turkey sandwiches, apples, and cheese sticks for athletes to eat during their away games.
- o The FFI 4-H Youth Team will be plotting the course for a bike path on the playground as part of a collaborative effort to have bikes and helmets available for use during recess. Students who choose to bike during recess will be encouraged to keep track of their miles.
- o Bike safety will be part of their elementary PE curriculum this spring.
- o Central applied for the bronze level of Healthier U.S. School's Challenge in March. The effort is a large part of the work the food service director has done to increase access to healthy foods during breakfast and lunch.

Decorah:

- o The Decorah School Wellness Team held *Go for the Gold!*, which included 94 people representing 22 families on Sunday, March 18th. The event combined sessions of family cooking along with active family group challenges: including Hogworts Biatholon, Jamacian Bobsled Scoot, Mano y Mano Futbol, Love your Beans, Gold Star Snacks, and Basic Knife Skills. Local Chef Justin Scardina prepared a delicious meal on a budget. Each plate was \$2.75 and included roasted root vegetables, white bean salad, smoked paprika braised chicken thighs, salad, black bean brownies, and tomato rice pilaf.
- o The Decorah and St. Ben's Cross-Age Teaching Teams completed lessons on wheat and local honey.

Howard-Winneshiek:

- o Lime Springs K- 2nd graders were involved in planting at Lime Springs which included preparing soil, planting radishes and starting lettuce indoors.
- o Lime Springs kindergartners and 1st graders are planning an "Earth Day Celebration."
- o Physical education teacher, Shelly McAllister, planned a school-wide walk-to-school day in Cresco to promote walking and biking to school and Walking School Buses.
- o Crestwood Jr. High/Elementary School held its annual "Family Night" on March 7th. Cross-age teachers explained the FFI Farm to School Cross-Age Teaching Program and sampled healthy black bean dip. The FFI Safe Routes to School Liaison, Heidi Skildum, and the FFI Resource Contact, Leah Chapman, and McAllister encouraged walking and biking to school.
- o The Cresco Cross-Age Teaching Teams completed lessons on wheat and local honey.

MFL MarMac:

- o The school nurse at the McGregor Center has been teaching health lessons including self-esteem, relaxation, and self-care. Upcoming topics? Bullying, fruits and vegetables, and yoga.
- o The McGregor Center's assistant principal will sponsor a Fun Night for grades 4-6. There will be dodgeball, ping-pong, hockey, beanbags, and board games throughout the school. Peer-helpers had a role in organizing and supervising the event.

(MORE ABOUT MFL MARMAC ON PAGE 3)

Senator Bartz Visits New Hampton

On Friday, March 9th Iowa Senator Merlin Bartz paid a visit to the New Hampton FFI 4-H Youth Team.

The event started with a tour of the recently completed FFA greenhouse at New Hampton High School. The tour was led by several FFA and FFI members. Bartz learned more about the work being done on the local foods front at New Hampton schools.

After the greenhouse tour, the FFI team and the Senator went through the lunch line and ate together in the Family Consumer Science classroom. During lunch students outlined what Food & Fitness means to them, lay out the goals of the Initiative for the Senator, and discuss what can be done at the state level to support this mission.

This event was a great opportunity to gain state-wide recognition of the great things New Hampton schools and in Northeast Iowa to help make the healthy choice the easy choice.



- o The district continues to participate in the *Live Healthy Iowa Challenge*. Physical activity minutes are recorded and updated in the cafeteria. The prize for most participation in the *Live Healthy Iowa Challenge* is a class game of Rock Band during advisory hour—so far this has been a very popular activity with the students. An upper elementary class won a challenge in the last reporting period and received Subway sandwiches for the whole class.
- o The 7th and 8th grade students will be asked to participate in *The Clean Plate Challenge* in April in collaboration with the 7th grade field trip. *The Clean Plate Challenge* is part of an effort to reduce waste over the lunch hour and will be monitored weekly by 7th and 8th grade teachers. The winning teams will receive the "Gold Plate Award."

New Hampton:

- o The FFI Resource Contact, Melanie Stewart, continued nutrition lessons in the elementary school—topics included whole grains and honey, portion sizes, and classifying foods.
- o The 3rd graders attended an anti-bullying mini-retreat focused on social and emotional wellness. The event was co-planned by Principal Linda Kennedy, guidance counselor Nancy Kriener, and the FFI Resource Contact, Melanie Stewart.
- o The New Hampton FFI 4-H Youth Team hosted Iowa Senator Merlin Bartz for a tour of the FFA greenhouse project, a school lunch meal, and a conversation about FFI (see sidebar).
- o The New Hampton Middle School has received *Fuel Up to Play 60* funds! The grant will cover a new wellness mural on the cafeteria walls, new kitchen equipment, a cafeteria herb garden, various aerobic and exercise DVDs, and support with the upcoming Olympic day.

North Fayette:

- o Received \$ 6,105 from the Fayette County Community Foundation grant for the "Grow Green Kids Greenhouse Project."
- o They started installation of the greenhouse at West Union Elementary School on Saturday, March 31st.
- o *Fuel Up to Play 60* breakfast taste-test on March 28th was banana burritos.

- o North Fayette hosted a community FEEST event on March 11th (see page 5).
- o The FFI 4-H Youth Team is helping with an alcohol forum sponsored by Helping Services in West Union.
- o Cross-age teachers went into 4th grade classrooms at West Union Elementary and taught students how to make smoothies.

North Winneshiek:

- o Sixth grade students started bell pepper seeds during science. The seeds will be nurtured under growlights. Students will care for the seedlings before transplanting to the garden. The 6th graders also sprouted sunflower seeds in glass jars. The sprouts were ready in two days and were enjoyed by the students during class.
- o Fourth grade teacher, Melissa Wicklund, concluded her writing unit by having her students write a step-by-step paragraph about how to prepare the perfect PB&J sandwich. She then hosted a "PB&J Picnic" where Wicklund and her students enjoyed a family-style meal at a banquet table and discussed dinnertime etiquette and conversation.
- o Fourth grade students have been using activity monitors and graphed their physical activity. They have also started sitting on ball chairs during class and taking "brain breaks" periodically throughout the day (see page 7).
- o The FFI 4-H Youth Team sampled smoothies and will help with school-wide breakfast taste-tests.
- o North Winn received *Fuel Up To Play 60* funds! The money will be used to implement a number of wellness initiatives, including breakfast taste tests, new equipment for the kitchen, PE equipment for various classrooms, and a cafeteria makeover.

Cross-Age Teaching Expands: Another 24 Food & Fitness 4-Her's from Fayette and Chickasaw counties were trained on cross-age teaching model in February. Both schools have shown readiness to engage high school and middle school students as educators in elementary classrooms with a focus on healthy eating and physical activity. The training model follows the ISU researched-based BOOMERRANG! Curriculum implementing the 4-H experiential model of Do-Reflect-Apply. To watch a video about cross-age teaching, produced by ISU Extension and Outreach-- *Acting in Catalytic Ways: Turkey Valley & Local Foods...* Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jKa2MYSjUU>

Food & Fitness schools not participating in the Farm to School program will have a menu of lessons to use the model. *Ages & Stages of Youth Development* is a primary training activity that youth participate in to prepare lessons and activities appropriately. Understanding physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities in these elementary students is vital for success in the classroom. FFI grant dollars made it possible for new resources kits. Several lessons will be created for cross-age teaching teams to use with food kits, featuring the new Choose my Plate—the newest resource to help people think different about food choices.

Oelwein:

- o Eighteen Oelwein staff and student teams are participating in a *Walk Across Iowa* challenge.
- o Stephanie Conant, the FFI Resource Contact, hosted a Cooking Workshop for 4th grade students. Conant, and the School Wellness Team hosted a meeting featuring healthy recipes and snacks for families.
- o Mr. Rex's 4th grade class won the *Iowa Fuel Up to Play 60 "Cooking Show Challenge"*. Asher Allen of the Minnesota Vikings will visit their school in April as a reward. View the award winning video here: <http://bit.ly/rHINOb>
- o The Oelwein Cross-Age Teaching Team taught lessons on whole grains and local honey.

Postville:

- o Postville elementary students continue to participate in the *Live Healthy Iowa 100-Day Wellness Challenge* by recording their daily veggie servings and minutes of physical activity.
- o Postville's school garden is the recipient of a Master Gardeners & 4-H Youth – Youth Voice: Youth Choice Community Partner Program funded by a grant from Wal-Mart.
- o The Postville Cross-Age Teachers taught lessons about wheat and local honey.

Riceville:

- o The Riceville FFI 4-H Youth Team learned how to team-teach, and will teach to elementary classrooms.
- o The School Wellness Team has a new member, Lynn Howe, as a strong parent voice for the school. Welcome, Lynn!
- o In celebration of March Madness, the Riceville FFI 4-H Youth Team organized a bracket-style knockout tournament for the high school advisor rooms.

South Winneshiek:

- o The FFI RC is teaching nutrition education lessons in the second grade classrooms.

Starmont:

- o Members of Starmont's After-School Club talked about garden plans by participating in a seasonality lesson taught by FFI Resource Contact, Elizabeth Makarewicz (see page 5). They will be starting pepper and eggplant seeds for their school garden soon.
- o Starmont Cross-Age Teachers taught lessons about wheat and local honey.

St Joe's:

- o The St. Joe's FFI 4-H Youth Team hosted a dance party for their monthly all-school fitness event with the "Just Dance" Wii game and learning to do The Interlude! The team also hosted a volunteer after-school game of Mat Ball to provide fun opportunities for kids to be active.
- o The St. Joe's school garden has officially sprung with the start of pepper seeds. PE teacher Trevor Rockewell has constructed grow lights for the seeds to germinate in the school's science lab.

Turkey Valley:

- o Turkey Valley staff are participating in "Wednesday Walkers."
- o The FFI RC, School Wellness Team, and teachers coordinated a March pepper-planting day for pre-K, Kindergarten, and 1st grade students.
- o The Turkey Valley Wellness Team has planned a smoothie taste-testing event with a student-faculty basketball game.

- o The Turkey Valley School Wellness Team planned "Colors of the Rainbow Week" March 26th - 30th. Fruits and vegetables were highlighted on the lunch line and students wore corresponding colored t-shirts.
- o The Turkey Valley Cross-Age Teachers taught lessons on wheat and local honey.

Valley Community:

- o Resource Contact Elizabeth Makarewicz taught all 1st and 2nd graders at Valley about the five food groups using the My Plate model. Afterwards students sampled whole wheat bread from the grain category.
- o Valley elementary students continue to participate in the *Live Healthy Iowa 100-Day Wellness Challenge* by recording their daily veggie servings and minutes of physical activity.
- o Valley's garden team drew up a blueprint for this season's garden space—hexagon-shaped raised beds will be built by students in the High School's Industrial Tech class and space has been reserved for an outdoor classroom. The school is currently accepting garden donations. Valley students will be starting pepper and eggplant seeds for their school garden before the start of April!

West Central:

- o The Local Foods Cooking Club met the first two weeks in March with 4-6 graders and K-3 graders to make whole wheat vegetable muffins and learn the importance of consuming whole grains.
- o The school received a \$2,000 high-end All-Clad cookware kit due to its creation of an after-school local foods cooking club. Students have worked with a professional baker from Oelwein and will be working with other professional chefs throughout the year.
- o Middle school students tested the soil for science class with Mr. Huckins to make sure the soil was safe for the future school garden.
- o Gordon Murray-John performed the first till of the lawn for the school garden- there will be two more rounds of tilling.
- o The West Central Wellness Team held its monthly recreation night on March 12th.

STARMONT AFTER SCHOOL CLUB STUDENTS LEARN A LESSON ON SEASONALITY

On Wednesday, March 7th students at Starmont's After-School Club asked the question, "Why can't we grow pineapples in Iowa?" To answer that question, and also to prepare students for the planting of a new school garden, Resource Contact Elizabeth Makarewicz visited these inquisitors.

To start out the lesson, Makarewicz had each student color his or her favorite vegetable and fruit on separate sheets of paper. Students then "planted" each of their drawings in an imaginary garden plot. As each student laid a fruit or vegetable down, students discussed whether or not that plant would grow well in Iowa.

Unlikely candidates: pineapple, kiwi, and bananas. As balmy as March has been this year, students agreed these tropical fruits weren't likely to do well without some added heat and moisture. And what were students' favorite locally grown foods? Hands-down: corn and watermelon.

"F.E.E.S.T is a wonderful opportunity to work with students and adults cooking local food. I loved helping kids and it's a highlight in my week. Youth are so busy—they don't often get the time to learn about healthy cooking. When more Family & Consumer Sciences departments are being downsized or eliminated this is even more important."

-Cici Mueller, community champion & F.E.E.S.T. community partner.



EXTRA, EXTRA-- READ ALL ABOUT IT!



Recently, Elizabeth Makarewicz, the FFI Resource Contact, sat down with Postville food service director Laurie Smith to gain insight on what it's like to feed a school district of 550 students. In her very first year as director, Laurie has brought some very positive changes to Postville's school lunch and breakfast. With a focus on ordering fresh and local produce as much as possible, Laurie is taking the right steps to ensure the healthy choice is the easy choice for Postville students.

RC: What are your job responsibilities?

LS: I oversee the kitchen staff and order all the food. I help prepare the food as well, do a lot of paperwork, and market the fresh fruit and vegetable program. It is also my responsibility to oversee special functions like chili suppers, or drama dinners. I am also the school wellness team chair. It's a nice blend of paperwork, office management/prepping and cooking!

RC: What's the most rewarding part of your work?

LS: Kids, especially, but when teachers or faculty say "Oh, lunch was really good!", "Nice changes!", and "The jicama was awesome!" I hear a lot of comments from kids when something different comes along and they like it!

RC: What's the biggest challenge?

LS: Calculating to make sure we have enough food. One day for our Christmas meal, 2nd grade also had a manners meal so they had their parents come too. Not all of the parents signed up ahead of time, but I needed to plan ahead. We ended up having enough food, but it was stressful! Also, I try to use fresh or frozen over canned stuff, but sometimes I have to compromise. I try to keep an open mind and use my good communication skills!

RC: Do you have a favorite dish to serve/make at school?

LS: My favorite might not be what the kids like! This year I've tried turkey dressing sandwiches, and a couple new casseroles, but kids just aren't into casseroles. I do like coming up with different salads for the salad bar, like Texas caviar and using different fresh fruits and vegetables.

RC: You've used a lot of local foods this school year (great job!), what are the benefits?

LS: I feel bad because nothing's in season right now! I order all our local food from Grown Locally. At the beginning of the year, I wrote all the produce and vegetables that I could possibly use, and gave a price, and [the distributor] had to meet me at that price. I sent it to Grown Locally, Hawkeye, and Jovilette farms. That farm visit I did with Grown Locally really pulled things together for me! These extra things I do make my job easier. And now everyone knows me! I felt like everywhere I went, people say, oh, I've heard about you! That was very inviting. I really enjoy meeting all these people.

RC: Do you work with the school gardeners here in Postville?

LS: Yes! They bring in their list, and I use whatever they bring me! It's a little extra work, but it is good. And I always put a little note card out saying it's from the garden. They did ask me what I would like. I asked for more Chinese cabbage, since they'd had me sample that before and I liked it.

RC: What are some things that would make your job easier?

LS: Space! I am getting another cooler, so that'll be nice. Staff-wise, I'm good. Everybody really helps each other. Education is always accepted, for constant learning. I do lots of webinars, and take advantage of any opportunity that comes along, even when it's not required. Also, new ideas and recipes! I try to mix things up.

RC: You've done a lot with the Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program, and trying new foods in the cafeteria...are students receptive to trying new things?

LS: For testing week, we're doing it every day to get them ready for their test! They don't really like kohlrabi (some do, and some don't), but they really liked the rainbow carrots! Other favorites include cucumbers, clementines, and turnips.

RC: Wow! Turnips. That's a surprise. Do you have advice for encouraging students to try new foods?

LS: Even though you don't get it at home, try it! You might like it. Tell your family that you like it. Live a little! Healthy food makes you feel better. If students don't like it, try serving it in a different way.

RC: Why is good nutrition important, in your opinion?

LS: It makes your brain think more easily, and you're more awake, and sharp in life!

Reflections from Sonja Arneson-Ecklund

MOVEMENT FOR THE CLASSROOM: CHAIR YOGA FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS

Whole Wellness: Whole Curriculum teacher workshop was all about getting teachers to integrate wellness into the classroom. My role was to educate teachers about how to use their desk as a foundation for a physical activity routine in the form of chair yoga. It's part of the growing effort to create places where people have abundant opportunities for physical activity in the places where they live, learn, work, and play.

Chair yoga is beneficial for teachers to practice during their long stretches of desk-time and for students, who spend hours sitting in their desks without many opportunities for physical activity breaks. My presentation included chair yoga stretching poses chosen to address "swayback posture," which develops in teachers because of rocking back and forth on the hips during classroom lectures. The teachers received a handout about the six poses to practice at work. Participants in *Whole Wellness: Whole Curriculum* talked about ways yoga could enhance their curriculum. Math teachers suggested using triangle poses and extended side angle poses to illustrate math terms; history teachers suggested using a pyramid pose while studying ancient Egyptians; music teachers talked about using yoga breathing principles during warm-ups; PE teachers suggested using yoga for relaxation or during indoor recess; and art teachers thought they could use the poses to practice human gesture drawing.



March 2012

Thank you to those who attended the 2012 School Wellness Retreat. We appreciate your contributions and engagement. It's our hope you will use what you learned and spread the news!



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

FITNESS FRENZY IN 4TH GRADE

Melissa Wicklund and her 4th grade students at North Winneshiek Community School have been working hard to integrate fitness and wellness into their classroom on a daily basis.

"All the 4th grade students wear activity monitors, we take several 'brain breaks' throughout the day, and the students sit on exercise balls to achieve active learning," Ms. Wicklund says, "This year has been filled with learning opportunities through our new fitness frenzy for both the students and me."

The school received a \$1,500 grant from the Northeast Iowa FFI to purchase activity monitors, in part because Ms. Wicklund volunteered to make the program a part of her curriculum.

"It was a great opportunity for me to teach the students about being more active. What I didn't expect was how much it would teach me about my students, my classroom, and myself," Ms. Wicklund reports. Since the beginning of the project, Ms. Wicklund's point of view has changed; "We don't sit for long periods of time anymore - Students are active in my classroom. Whether we're up and moving about doing an activity together or participating in brain breaks [exercise in the middle of a lessons intended to get the students' brains back on task], we are more active on a daily basis than we ever have been before."

Each student wears an activity monitor, a wristwatch tracking physical activity throughout the day. "We encourage movement here at school and at home," Ms. Wicklund explains, "there are no grades associated with the activity diary on their watches, but students do write down their activity so that we can make graphs during math class."

The activity monitors have had an impact upon setting goals during PE class and outside on the playground. But perhaps most importantly, "the activity monitors have made a huge impact on my teaching and the students learning about themselves."

Ms. Wicklund's other big project is to replace all the chairs in her classroom with ball chairs. Ball chairs are stability balls used for exercise and as chairs in offices and schools around the country. "Our most recent project is called 'Keep Students on the Ball.' We're working on raising the funds to allow all of my students to sit on an exercise ball [during class] to activate their learning. Research says that when students are sitting on exercise balls, their brains are more engaged because they're able to put their brain to work while their body is also physically active."

The work Ms. Wicklund is doing to make her classroom an active place is part of the efforts of the Northeast Iowa FFI, and personal commitment on Ms. Wicklund's part to make her classroom a healthy place.

