

# The Paper

Our Town, Our Paper!



Laurens, Iowa



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January 21,  
2026

## Local News

### Pocahontas Economic Development Awards

The PCEDC proudly announced the recipients of the 2025 Pocahontas Economic Development Awards, recognizing individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to economic growth, business development, and community vitality in the Pocahontas area.

*Spirit Award-Julie Wurr with Heart 'n Home*

*Boss of the Year-Steve Pelz with Palmer Telephone Company*

*Small Business of the Year- Schroeders with True Value Farm and Home*

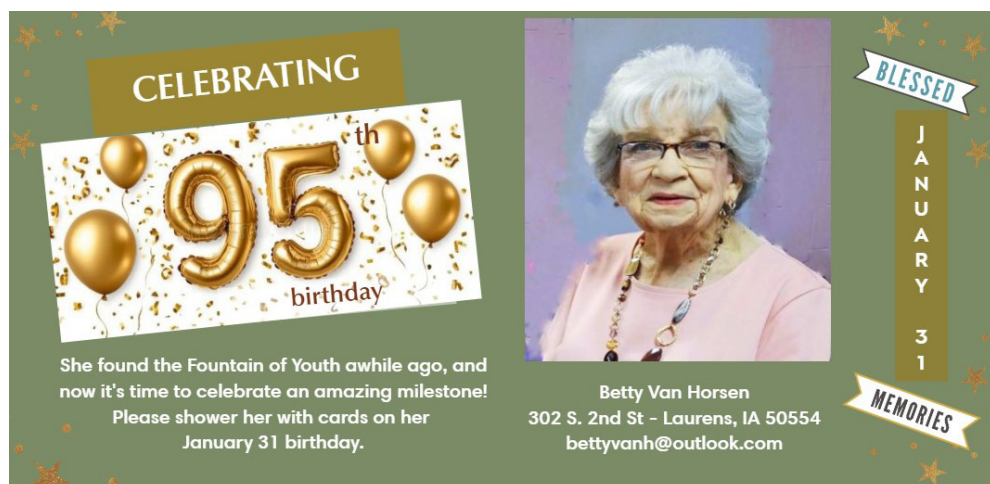
*Large Business of the Year- Pro Cooperative*

*Young Professional of the Year-Eric Gerdes*

*Distinguished Service Award-Jim Pentico, former mayor of Rolfe*

*Cornerstone Award-Rialto Theatre*





Ninety-five years of laughter and sometimes a tear. A journey filled with memories she holds dear. Here's the ninety-five years of shining bright. She's had a well lived life and been a guiding light. Her heart is kind and she is always sharing a smile. Here's to more memories from across the miles.

*Thank you for honoring Mom with your thoughts and cards!*

*-Michael, Tammy & Bill*



**Thursday**

**January 29, 2026—7:00 p.m.**

**Happy Hour - 6:00 p.m.**



## *Scholarships Available for Pocahontas County Senior 4-H Members*

The Pocahontas County ISU Extension Council once again is excited to offer up to ten \$1,000 scholarships to graduating 4-H senior members in 2026.

Eligible members planning to attend an accredited college, university, vocational program, or apprenticeship are encouraged to apply. Applications are available at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/pocahontas/> or may be picked up at the ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County Office.

All applications must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on February 2, 2026. For more information regarding scholarship applications please contact Ashlie at the Pocahontas County ISU Extension Office, [ashliej@iastate.edu](mailto:ashliej@iastate.edu) or 712-335-3103.

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## *Explore the Effects and Treatments of Parkinson's Disease*

Growing older is the greatest risk factor for acquiring Parkinson's disease and many people live with symptoms for several years before being diagnosed. Often people in early stages of Parkinson's disease assume their symptoms are part of normal aging or are due to other health problems they may have, such as arthritis. However, early Parkinson's disease symptoms may not be that apparent and may even come and go. Frequently it is the spouse or other relatives who first notice slight problems with a loved one's movements.

To learn about Parkinson's disease, its effects, and possible treatments, register now to participate in "A Journey Through Parkinson's Disease" an educational series from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Iowa State's Department of Kinesiology and Health and Human Sciences Extension and Outreach are sponsoring a virtual series beginning February 19.

The educational series consists of three, 1-hour sessions held once a week for three weeks. Cathy Drost and Tom Keinert, health and human sciences educators, will teach the classes, which include interactive lessons, discussions, and activities. Sessions are scheduled for February 19, February 26, and March 5 from 1:00-2:00 PM online. For more information or to register on-line, go <https://go.iastate.edu/NDJCGP> or contact Cathy Drost at 641-676-9123 or by e-mail at [cdrost@iastate.edu](mailto:cdrost@iastate.edu).

"You will learn about the signs of Parkinson's disease and how to seek medical care, as well as the cause of the disease and how specific treatments work. You will also learn about alternative therapies and in-home activities that can delay the progression of Parkinson's disease, which is very important for continuing to live a full and happy life," said Drost.

*Biggest Little Paper In Town!*

## *4-H Youth Participate in Winter Break Leadership and Recreation Events*

4-H members from Pocahontas County and Region 8 counties, including Humboldt, Buena Vista, Webster, and Hamilton, stayed active over winter break by participating in two events held at Twin Lakes Camp in Manson Iowa.

Youth in grades 4–6 attended a Junior Winter Retreat, where they built friendships through challenge-based activities that encouraged confidence and teamwork, created winter-themed crafts, and enjoyed recreational activities such as rock climbing, gaga ball as well as winter activities on the lake.

Older members in grades 9–12 took part in a Youth County Council Senior Lock-In, which emphasized leadership development while also participating in winter recreational activities, including tobogganing and ice skating.

These winter programs provided opportunities for youth to build life skills, connect with peers from across the region, and participate in hands-on learning experiences.



Malia and McKenna – Pocahontas Co 4-H members.

***At the Library***  
***with Glenda Mulder***  
***January 21, 2026***

New fiction recently includes: *The Storm* by Rachel Hawkins, *Woman Down* by Colleen Hoover, *Wreck Your Heart* by Lori Rader-Day, *Anatomy of an Alibi* by Ashley Elston, *Skylark* by Paula McLain, *Order of Royals* by Jude Deveraux, *The Invisible Woman* by James Patterson, *The Viper* by Brad Meltzer Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell, *Beautiful Venom & Sweet Venom* by Rita Kent, *The First Time I Saw Him* by Laura Dave and *The Shop on Hidden Lane* by Jayne Ann Krentz. In nonfiction we received *Everything is Tuberculosis* by John Green and *Family of Spies: a World War II story of Nazi espionage, betrayal, and the secret history behind Pearl Harbor* by Christine Kuehn.

Have you read Mitch Albom's latest book *Twice* yet? It's one of my recent favorites! It poses the question, "What if you got to do everything in your life—twice?" Alfie discovers, at eight years old, the magical ability to get a second chance at everything. He can undo any moment and live it again. The one catch: he must accept the consequences of his second try—for better or worse. See why I think this will make a great discussion? This book set was purchased by the Laurens Public Library Foundation as a new project. Hope you can discuss this with us Monday, January 26 at 7 p.m.

***Mark Your Calendar***

January 26 @ 7 p.m. - Book Club - *Twice* by Mitch Albom

February 2 & 16 @ 5:30 p.m. - Evening Tot Time

February 3 @ 3:30-5:00 p.m. - Kids Make & Take Penguins!

February 3 @ 6:30 p.m. - Take it Tuesday Heart Painting

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**Join us for our 2026 Leadership Series which is designed for both professional and personal growth. These sessions will focus on communication skills, team building, customer service and building stronger relationships at work and home. This three-part program will be held at Prairie Lakes AEA in Pocahontas, IA from 9am to 11am and cost \$25 per person per session. Registration deadline is February 20th.**

### 1 March 13th | Communication

If you had to rate your communication skills on a scale of 1 to 10, what number would you give yourself? In this engaging, interactive session, we will explore simple strategies for increasing your effectiveness as a communicator, particularly at work. We'll cover key areas including consideration of your listeners' perspective; active listening skills; deductive vs. inductive communication; nonverbal communication; and when to use different modes of communication (email vs. phone). These strategies can be implemented to make you more skillful and effective when you communicate.

### 2 April 10th | Emotional Intelligence

How effective are you at relating to others? Do you have a good grasp on which personality types set you off? Can you remain calm in the face of annoyances? Decades of research on these types of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) skills have repeatedly demonstrated that people who have higher levels of Emotional Intelligence enjoy greater success and satisfaction at work, at home, and in their relationships. During this, interactive session, you will learn several user-friendly strategies for increasing your EQ. We'll start by introducing 25 key competencies of people with high levels of EQ, then work into strategies for improvement in Self Awareness; Self-Management; Social Awareness; and Relationship Management.

### 3 May 8th | Crucial Conversations

We've all been there—dreading an unavoidable difficult conversation. In a workplace, it might mean talking to a colleague who missed a critical deadline, confronting a team member about inappropriate behavior, or discussing issues that feel too "hot-button" to address. In this session, we will walk step-by-step through a framework for having those difficult conversations in ways that keep the conversation calm and productive. We'll start by helping participants understand their own natural styles of responding to difficult conversations, then work into learning specific strategies for conversing with others whose style may be very different from their own. These strategies can be easily applied to difficult conversations at both work and home.

## REGISTER HERE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer/Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Attending: March 13<sup>th</sup> ☐ April 10<sup>th</sup> ☐ May 8<sup>th</sup> ☐

Cost per session per person = \$25

Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration deadline: February 20th**

Return this form along with your payment to MaryJo at PCEDC Office (111 N Main Street, P.O. Box 212, Pocahontas, IA 50574)

Make checks payable to: Pocahontas County Leadership Fund



### Brenda Clark Hamilton

Brenda Clark Hamilton is a dynamic keynote speaker and workplace trainer who offers fresh perspectives in leadership, communication, and offering one's personal best to life, relationships, and career.

Brenda launched her speaking business in the fall of 2005, by offering training to businesses in her northern Iowa community. She spoke at her first statewide conference in 2008. Since that time, she has become a nationally recognized conference speaker and audience favorite, speaking at approximately 100 events each year, in every industry imaginable.

Audiences are quick to note Brenda's sense of humor, in-depth knowledge, high energy, and skill at keeping them engaged. Brenda's career experience includes coordinating professional development for 1200 Iowa teachers. She holds a Master's degree in education.



[pocahontascounty.iowa.gov/economic-development/](http://pocahontascounty.iowa.gov/economic-development/) Questions? E-mail: [litwiller@iowacentral.edu](mailto:litwiller@iowacentral.edu) Phone: 712-730-2259



## ***This Week at Bethany Lutheran***

**Pastor David E. Klappenbach**

**Wednesday: January 21, 2026**

**7:00 PM ~ Confirmation**

**Sunday: January 25, 2026**

**Third Sunday after Epiphany**

9:15 AM Adult SS & Youth SS

9:30 AM ~ Coffee Fellowship

10:30 AM ~ Worship

Annual Congregational Mtg. following  
worship

Bethany Prayer Group after meeting

**Monday: January 26, 2026**

7:00 PM ~ Hand Bell Rehearsal

**Tuesday: January 27, 2026**

8:30 AM ~ Prayer Group

9:30 AM ~ Tuesday coffee at Bethany

**Wednesday: January 28, 2026**

7:00 PM ~ Confirmation

***Worship, Love,  
Accept~ Together in  
Christ's Name***



## ***This Week at Laurens United Methodist Church***

**Pastor Deb Parkison**

January 4 through February 15:

Pastor Paul will be in the Pulpit

**Wednesday, January 21:**

SPPRC Meeting in the Wesley Room

@ 6:00 PM

Christian Education Meeting @ 7:00

PM in the Wesley Room

**Saturday, January 24:**

UMM Meeting at 8:00 AM in

Fellowship Hall

**Sunday, January 25:**

Sunday School @ 9:15

Adult Sunday School @ 9:30 AM

Fellowship Coffee @ 10:00 AM

Worship Service @ 10:30 AM

Sunday School Christmas Program

during worship



## ***This Week at First Christian***

**Pastor Rev. Rita Cordell**

**Thursday, Jan. 22**

2-5 p.m. - Clothes Closet open

**Sunday, Jan. 25**

9:30 a.m. - Sunday School

10:30 a.m. - Worship



## ***Resurrection of Our Lord Catholic Church***

**Pocahontas, IA -- Priest:**

**Father Paul Nguyen**

**MASS TIMES:**

Daily Mass as scheduled in the  
weekly bulletin

Saturday at 5:00 PM and Sunday at  
10:30 AM

**Confessions:** Saturday 4:15 pm at  
Resurrection

## *First Sessions Set for Community Matters Live Webinar Series*

Registration is open for the first three sessions of Community Matters Live, a new monthly webinar series for people involved in housing, planning and community development work across Iowa. The series is delivered by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development.

Community Matters Live spotlights timely, Iowa-focused topics and brings together Iowa experts and ISU Extension and Outreach specialists who work directly with communities. Each session features expert insights, practical tools, and examples drawn from community and economic development work across the state.

“Local officials and community partners often have to respond quickly to new laws, changing conditions and emerging challenges,” said Jen Hargrove, community development specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach. “Community Matters Live gives them reliable information and real-world context so they can approach those decisions with confidence.”

The series is intended for local elected officials, city and county staff, planners, housing partners and developers, economic development professionals, nonprofit staff and board and commission members.

### **Upcoming sessions:**

- Jan. 28 – Understanding Iowa's New Accessory Dwelling Unit Legislation. Learn about Iowa's recent ADU legislation changes and how communities can understand and navigate the new law.
- Feb. 25 – Statewide Updates on Iowa's Housing and Habitat for Humanity. Learn how Habitat for Humanity of Iowa approaches construction costs, infill lots, and family selection, and what that means for local partners working on housing needs in their own communities.
- March 25 – Attracting Developers—Especially in Small Towns. Learn what developers consider when evaluating smaller communities for potential projects, featuring community successes from Waukon, Sheldon and Maquoketa that highlight local readiness strategies.

Additional sessions for spring and summer 2026 will be announced later this winter.

Registration is available online. For more information or questions about the series, email [cedcml@iastate.edu](mailto:cedcml@iastate.edu).

## *Nichol Kleespies Hired as Regional Director for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach*

Nichol Kleespies has accepted the position of regional director with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach serving Cherokee, Buena Vista, Ida, Sac and Calhoun counties. She begins the position Jan. 26. As regional director, Kleespies will provide administrative leadership to county extension office staff and guidance to county extension councils.

Kleespies has served ISU Extension and Outreach with the 4-H Youth Development program for more than a decade in multiple capacities. Her experience includes leading staff to ensure high quality program delivery, providing budget and fiscal oversight, and developing systems and procedures that support program fidelity during a period of transition.

She received her bachelor's degree in business management and entrepreneurship from Buena Vista University, a master's in education administration from Colorado State University and Doctor of Business Administration from National University in California.

“Nichol brings strong, established relationships across multiple areas in Iowa and internally, which will make her a successful regional director,” said Andrea Welchans, assistant vice president for ISU Extension and Outreach. “We congratulate Nichol and welcome her to our team.”

ISU Extension and Outreach is part of the federal Cooperative Extension Service — a network of more than 100 land-grant institutions, including Iowa State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture serving communities and counties across the United States. Every county in Iowa has an elected extension council that decides how to support ISU Extension and Outreach educational programs at the county level.

For more information about ISU Extension and Outreach, visit [www.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.extension.iastate.edu).

## *Start 2026 Strong: How Mental and Financial Wellness Work Together*

January is more than a fresh calendar – it's a chance to reset priorities and build habits that last. For many Iowans, mental health and financial stability top the list of New Year's resolutions. These goals aren't just related; they actually reinforce each other, says Danielle Day, a health and human sciences educator with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

"When we feel financially secure, our stress levels drop. And when we're mentally resilient, we make better money decisions," Day said. "The key is starting small and aligning your goals with your personal values and what matters most to you."

Research shows that financial stress is one of the leading causes of anxiety. At the same time, mental fatigue can lead to poor spending habits. Combining strategies for both areas creates a positive cycle: less stress, more clarity and stronger decision-making.

Research recommends setting value-based goals. Day suggests writing down three things that matter most to you, such as family, health or security, and choosing one small action for each.

"People who write down their goals are also about 20% more likely to achieve them," Day added.

Big changes can feel exciting, but they can also overwhelm your system. According to the Resilience Rule of 2, a strategy for dealing with change, our brains and routines can realistically handle only one or two changes at a time. Trying to overhaul everything at once often leads to burnout and frustration. Start with two small, meaningful changes that align with your values. Once those feel natural, add more. This approach builds confidence and sustainability, which sets a person up for success.

**Practical Steps for January.** "Here are three practical ideas you can consider when setting New Year's goals that support your mental and financial wellbeing. Then pick two to start," Day said.

- **Connect and budget.** Schedule a weekly check-in with a friend or family member and use that time to review your spending plan. Social connection boosts mood, and financial check-ins keep you accountable.
- **Automate for peace of mind.** Set up automatic savings transfers. Even \$10 a week adds up to more than \$500 a year, reducing money stress and building confidence.
- **Move and reflect.** A 10-minute walk after lunch improves mental health and gives you space to think about your financial priorities.

**Tools You Can Use.** ISU Extension and Outreach offers no-cost and low-cost resources to help you succeed:

- Money Smart workshops for budgeting and credit management
- Mental Health First Aid, "Question. Persuade. Refer." and Self-Care training to support emotional well-being
- The Iowa Concern Hotline (1-800-447-1985) for stress, legal and financial questions
- PowerPay (available through Utah State University Extension) for creating a debt payoff plan

"Start your new year off right by taking time to start today," Day said.

Take 15 minutes this week to write down your top three values and one action for each. Then, choose two actions to start with — your Resilience Rule of 2. For example:

- Family: Plan a weekly game night.
- Health: Commit to a short daily walk.
- Security: Automate savings — even small amounts matter.

"Small steps lead to big change. When mental and financial wellness work together, you set yourself up for a stronger, more balanced year," Day said.



## *Private Pesticide Continuing Instruction Course*

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County office will be offering one opportunity to attend the Private Pesticide Applicator Continuing Instruction Course (P-CIC), led by Extension Field Agronomist, Gentry Sorensen. The session is scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at the Rialto Theatre in Pocahontas. Preregistration may be required. Walk-ins on the day of the program will only be admitted if room allows. Please register by calling the ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County office at 712-335-3103 or mail your payment and form to ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County, 305 N Main Street, Pocahontas, IA 50574.

The course will run for approximately 2 ½ hours including check-in and breaks. The registration fee is \$30. To register or to obtain additional information about the P-CIC, contact your county extension office.

The course will fulfill 2025-2026 recertification requirements for private pesticide applicators. Topics to be covered include:

- Personal protective equipment and safe handling
- Professionalism, Storage of pesticides, including chemical security
- Pests, pest management, and pesticides

## *2026 Confinement Site Manure Applicator Training Scheduled for Pocahontas County*

Confinement site manure applicators should plan to attend a two-hour workshop offered by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to maintain or renew their confinement site manure applicator certification. The Pocahontas County workshop will be offered on Thursday, February 5 at 1:30 p.m. in Pocahontas. Please register by calling the ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County office at 712-335-3103.

“Iowa law requires confinement site manure applicators to attend two hours of continuing education each year of their three-year certification period or take and pass the exam once every three years,” said Dan Andersen, associate professor of agricultural and biosystems engineering, extension agriculture engineering specialist at ISU and coordinator of the manure applicator certification program. “If applicators fail to attend the two hours of continuing education each year, they will be required to pass a written exam to be eligible to recertify.”

Each year, nearly 300 confinement site applicators fail to attend training and must pass the remedial exam prior to being eligible to renew their certification for the following year.

The workshop serves as initial certification for those applicators not currently certified, recertification for those renewing licenses, and as continuing education for those applicators in the second or third year of their license.

The 2026 confinement site program will include rules for applicators, as well as land-application and setback distance requirements, a nitrogen guessing game in manure, the power of manure timing and cover crop cost share.

Operators must be certified to handle, transport and apply manure if the confinement livestock operation has more than a 500-animal unit capacity, unless the manure is applied by a commercial manure applicator. The certification fee is \$100 for a three-year certificate. This fee is paid when applicators initially get certified and then every three years thereafter when they recertify to apply manure.

Confinement site applicators are also required to pay an annual education fee of \$25. All fees and application forms must be sent to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to complete certification requirements.

Another option for commercial manure applicators is to take their training online at the Iowa DNR MAC Workday site (see “Manure Applicators Certification” > “Certification” > “Online”). Applicators will need to sign in and register for a Workday account.

Applicators are encouraged to complete their certification requirements annually prior to March 1 to meet certification deadlines and avoid being assessed a \$12.50 late fee for re-certification.

For more information about meeting dates and locations, or to schedule an appointment to attend training, contact the ISU Extension and Outreach – Pocahontas County Office at 712-335-3103 or visit the Confinement Site Applicators web page to see the 2026 workshop schedule.

## *Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Launches Initiative to Empower Independent Grocers*

A collaborative team at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, with funding support from the Iowa legislature, is launching a peer-to-peer learning network and webinar series for independent grocers across Iowa. The Iowa Independent Grocer Network will support local, independent grocers through engagement, professional development opportunities and technical assistance.

The program will kick off with a four-part webinar series running from January to May 2026. Each webinar will deliver timely insights, information on proven best practices and facilitated discussion. Owners and operators of local Iowa grocery stores are strongly encouraged to participate in the full webinar series.

The first webinar, “Independent Grocers and Choose Iowa,” will be held on Jan. 20 at 12:30 p.m. Special guest speakers will include Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig and State Representative Brian Lohse. In addition to grocer attendance, organizations supporting grocers are also encouraged to attend to learn more about the offerings that will be available.

Since 2012, ISU Extension and Outreach’s Farm, Food and Enterprise Development and Community and Economic Development programs have researched independent, local and rural grocers to understand the needs and challenges of local food procurement and the impact grocers have within their communities.

“Independently owned grocery stores serve as an anchor for our communities, providing food access, boosting the local economy and often acting as community hubs,” said Megan Kemp, extension education specialist. “Over the past few years, we have been hearing more frequently about the challenges that independent, local and rural grocers face, so it’s exciting to see statewide investment and support for these vital small businesses.”

**Webinar dates and registration.** The following webinars will focus on unique topics on their respective dates. Registration is available at no cost.

- Independent Grocers and Choose Iowa – Jan. 20, 12:30-2:30 p.m. Register.
- Business and Finance – March 17, 1-3 p.m. Register.
- Procurement and Logistics – April 21, 1-3 p.m. Register.
- Design, Marketing, and Store Layout – May 19, 1-3 p.m. Register.

For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Kemp at [mkemp@iastate.edu](mailto:mkemp@iastate.edu) or download the spring webinar series shareable flyer.

## *Registration Opens for New Iowa 4-H Livestock and Meat Judging Pop-up Clinics*

Iowa 4-H Youth Development has partnered with the Iowa State University Department of Animal Science to launch a new Livestock and Meat Judging Pop-up Clinic, a series of four hands-on learning events scheduled across Iowa this April. Registration is now open.

Designed for both youth and coaches, these clinics offer an accessible, expert-led opportunity to refine evaluation skills, deepen understanding of judging and prepare for upcoming competitions.

The pop-up clinics will deliver identical content at each location, allowing participants to choose the date and site that best fits their schedule. Registration for each site is \$50 and includes dinner, as well as high-quality resources and learning materials facilitated by Iowa State University livestock judging coaches and Iowa 4-H staff.

Anyone interested in building their livestock and meat judging skills, regardless of prior experience, is invited to attend. The clinics are open to youth in grades 4–12, and participation is not limited to current 4-H members. Coaches and adult volunteers are also welcome to join, making the clinics a valuable learning opportunity for both young people and the adults who support them.

These clinics support the broader goals of Iowa 4-H Animal Science Competitive Events, which help youth build essential life skills — including decision making, critical thinking, oral reasoning, self-confidence and problem-solving — through hands-on, experiential learning.

“These pop-up clinics will provide hands-on learning for youth to refine their evaluation skills, while also offering coaches professional development, resources and consistent approaches they can carry back to their local programs,” said Celine Beggs-Shoemaker, 4-H animal science program specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach.

### **Clinic dates, locations, registration**

- Register for Monday, April 13 clinic – Northeast Research and Demonstration Farm (Nashua)
- Register for Thursday, April 16 clinic – Washington County Fairgrounds (Washington)
- Register for Monday, April 20 clinic – Northwest Research and Demonstration Farm (Sutherland)
- Register for Thursday, April 23 clinic – Clarke County Fairgrounds (Osceola)

“Judging teaches far more than animal evaluation. It builds confidence, communication skills and the ability to make informed decisions — skills that benefit youth long after the contest ends,” Beggs-Shoemaker said.

Registration for all four Livestock and Meat Judging Pop-up Clinics is now open. Participants may register for the location that is most convenient for them using the links above. For more information on the Iowa 4-H Youth Development program, please contact your ISU Extension and Outreach county office or visit the Iowa 4-H website.

## ***Farm Couple Getaway Returns to Decorah in March***

To help farm families strengthen relationships and set family goals, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach will offer a Farm Couple Getaway. The event is designed for farmers who want to participate in activities aimed at improving farm family communication, working on farm or family goals, navigating farm transitions or simply taking a weekend away to discuss farm and family matters.

The getaway will take place from 12:30 p.m. on Friday, March 13, to 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 14, at the Hotel Winneshiek in Decorah.

Past Farm Couple Getaways have proven to be beneficial. “They are very productive and a delightful time to discuss items of importance to help farms and families be successful,” said Larry Tranel, dairy specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach.

Registration will be available on a first-come, first-served basis, with all registrations due by Feb. 27. The March getaway will accommodate 10 farm couples. The registration fee is \$50 per couple, with additional costs covered by local sponsorship.

To register, download the registration brochure or contact Jenn Bentley, dairy specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach, at [jbentley@iastate.edu](mailto:jbentley@iastate.edu); the ISU Extension and Outreach Winneshiek County office at 563-382-2949; Larry Tranel at [tranel@iastate.edu](mailto:tranel@iastate.edu); or the ISU Extension and Outreach Dubuque County office at 563-583-6496.

For more information, visit 2026 Farm Couple Getaway.

*Biggest Little Paper In Town!*

## ***Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Urban Agriculture Program to Host Choose Iowa Webinar***

The Iowa State University Urban Agriculture Program will host a webinar focused on Choose Iowa, the state’s signature brand for Iowa-grown and Iowa-made agricultural products, on Thursday, Feb. 12, from 1 to 2 p.m. Regan Freland, Choose Iowa membership and outreach coordinator, will provide an overview of the program and explain how farmers, food and beverage producers, horticulture businesses and community organizations can benefit from participation.

Choose Iowa is an Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship program that helps consumers identify products that are grown, raised or made in Iowa. Products displaying the Choose Iowa logo signal support for local farmers, businesses and communities. In 2025, the program expanded to include horticultural products, creating new opportunities for urban and small-scale growers across the state.

Freland will also highlight Choose Iowa grant opportunities, which support farmers, businesses and nonprofits seeking support for market access, on-farm processing or labor-reducing technologies.

Following the presentation, webinar attendees are encouraged to share their questions about Choose Iowa in a Q&A session with Freland.

Those interested in attending the virtual event must register online. The webinar is offered at no cost thanks to the USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program.

This program is part of an ongoing series connecting urban ag producers, professionals and community members with learning opportunities.

For more information, contact Graham Sandersfeld at [grsfeld@iastate.edu](mailto:grsfeld@iastate.edu) or Kathleen Delate at [kdelate@iastate.edu](mailto:kdelate@iastate.edu).

## ***Bins of Tomorrow Webinar to Focus on Grain Conditioning for Profitability***

Farmers are invited to participate in an upcoming “Bins of Tomorrow” webinar on Feb. 9 from noon to 1 p.m. The webinar is offered by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach agricultural engineering team and will focus on issues encountered during the 2025 grain harvest, grain quality and its storability in 2026.

Kapil Arora, field agricultural engineer with ISU Extension and Outreach, noted that the 2025 corn and soybean harvest had its unique challenges.

“Cooled grain with low moisture content is typically good for winter storage. The conditions of both soybeans and corn should be looked into as spring 2026 approaches,” he said. “Dry grain kernels are prone to shattering and splitting, which can cause issues during storage. Additionally, there is an economic loss when such grain is sold, as weights are not adjusted for corn with a moisture content below 15% or soybeans with a moisture content below 13%.”

Webinar topics include how to adjust weights using sensors, weather data and bin monitoring, using apps for decision-making and how to improve grain quality during storage, especially for soybeans. The webinar will be led by Dirk Maier, professor and director of the ISU Kent Feed Mill and Grain Science Complex.

Visit the Bins of Tomorrow website to register for the webinar or learn more about the Bins of Tomorrow programs. This webinar is offered to all participants at no cost, but registration is required.

Questions regarding the webinar can be directed to Kapil Arora at [pbtiger@iastate.edu](mailto:pbtiger@iastate.edu), Kris Kohl at [kkohl1@iastate.edu](mailto:kkohl1@iastate.edu) or Tony Mensing at [tmensing@iastate.edu](mailto:tmensing@iastate.edu).