

RISING STAR

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

2023 SUMMER REPORT

Region 11

Counties of Linn and Benton

Regional Director RaeAnn Gordon

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Rising Star Internship



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www.extension.iastate.edu/countyservices/rising-star-internship

Overview

As Region 11 Rising Star Interns, Lila and Keira worked from May 25 to August 1 between Linn and Benton counties. Each county had a different focus project corresponding to Lila and Keira's area of study at ISU. In Linn County, Lila took the lead on a design project at the Linn County Fairgrounds to design a new grandstand. Through networking with a variety of people to gather ideas to use design strategies learned through school, they were able to create a conceptual design for the fair association to start advertising. In Benton County, Keira took the lead on education and community involvement with gardening and nutrition. She got involved with many different groups in the Benton community to spread as much awareness and education as possible about the topics. By working with experts around the area she learned a lot about how to teach and help others.

Navigating two different projects, they were still able to find ways to work together to successfully complete the projects. They look forward to using the skills and knowledge we learned this summer in future classes, experiences, and careers!

Benton County

Spotlight: KCRG Interview

On June 30th, Keira was invited to speak with Anchor Jackie Kinnon at the KCRG station in Cedar Rapids about “How to keep healthy nutrition for kids in the summer.” Through this, Keira was able to give advice that could help local families and communities. First, Keira talked about how parents can do things like keep fresh produce in the fridge that is prepared to eat. Parents can prepare the fruit or vegetable in various ways to see if their children like it. She also talked about using something similar to the SWITCH Method created by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Parents can teach children how to switch out their favorite sugary snacks and drinks to an alternative sweet snack. The last thing that Keira covered on KCRG, was gardening as a life skill and how they can get involved with community gardens in their local area.



<https://www.kcrg.com/video/2023/06/30/how-keep-healthy-nutrition-kids-summer/>

Topic 1: Community Awareness about local nutrition insecurity, Old School Produce Partners, and their mission.

Benton County Fair Brochure

Prior to the Benton County Fair, different materials were prepared that would help make interns more successful at the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach booth. Keira and Lila made handouts that highlighted local food insecurity with the recent information that highlighted the repercussions of COVID-19. It also contained information about how people in the community can help, and what/where they can donate. Interns pointed out items like the donation box created in the local extension office, the upcoming Garden Party, Old School produce partners, and their mission. This educated Keira and Lila so that they could work some at the “Ask the Expert” Booth Iowa State was put on at the county fair.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF OLD SCHOOL PRODUCE?

Old School Produce Partners, which is a non-profit organization brings a harvest that will assist area food pantries across Benton County. This volunteer garden produces large quantities of potatoes, onions, tomatoes, etc. to provide these pantries with fresh produce in the summer months.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

DONATE

Think about donating nutritious canned goods or fresh produce rather than processed foods. Donate year-round, as it is harder to secure many donations in winter/spring months.

ADVOCATE

Stand up to legislation preventing those in need from getting food stamps rather than selling their assets.

GROW-A-ROW

Consider planting/starting an extra row in your garden to donate to your local food pantry.

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer at places like old school produce that donate fresh produce to pantries.

WHAT CAN YOU DONATE?

- Canned Soup
- Canned Fish
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Beans
- Canned Vegetables
- Rice

NEW DONATION CENTER COMING TO THE BENTON COUNTY ISU EXTENSION AND OUTREACH OFFICE!

FOOD INSECURITY IS A PRESSING ISSUE...

NEW LEGISLATION

Individuals with assets, such as a second car, must sell their assets before receiving food stamps, which means more people in need food pantries. Because of this, those in need of food stamps are faced with the challenge of choosing transportation or food.

COVID-19 REPERCUSSIONS

Maximum food insecurity as a result of Covid is predicted to peak in 2024. Covid also decreased funding to food pantries, food stamps, and food-based nonprofits, resulting in more need for donations and a higher amount of those in need of food services.



In an attempt to get more children and parents over to the Iowa State Extension and Outreach booth, Keira and Lila found a game that would draw kids to the booth. It had various types of produce such as peppers, carrots, cucumbers, squash, and more. For a hands-on experience, a produce item was put on one end and the participant would put their hand in the other. They could only feel the item which made it very difficult to name the product. The activity was fun for the 80 kids that played and even adults participated. It received a lot of people to the booth and more involvement for the Master Gardeners' booth.



Topic 2: Education in Benton County with children and adults with disabilities

REM Groups Lesson

The REM Group is a day habitation group that helps support adults with Developmental and physical disabilities in Vinton. Every other week they had a lesson with them that covered topics about nutrition and gardening. These lessons were a good way for them to learn new things, and have fun with one another. Keira and Lila were given the privilege to plant vegetables with them in a community garden in Vinton. They covered many different topics which discussed diet substitutions, new foods, and balanced meals. Building relationships with the groups, listening to jokes, and lots of hugs, were easily the highlight of the week. Interns were able to have contact with about 30 individuals over the course of 10 hours of collaboration, which may have impacted Keira and Lila more than it did them.



Summer Science Discovery

During the Summer, the County of Benton has Summer Science Discovery Camps where kids go to learn about areas of STEM. One day a week they discuss topics about seeds and where food comes from. Keira was able to help here by broadening the curriculum by expanding on seeds, gardening, nutrition, and local food/nutrition insecurity. They played games that had to do with how different foods and plants grow. In the end, Keira had contact with around 40 kids in this program who reminded her how to be creative, curious, and have fun!



Topic 3: Involvement in food pantries

Garden Party

On July 11th, Old School Produce(OSP) held an event organized by Keira that opened the doors to the garden and what they do. Flyers were hung across Vinton and posted online to get as much community awareness as possible. The main focus was to draw in community members who could contribute to OSP and to get as many food pantry participants to come to the event. At the event volunteers from the garden talked about the mission of the garden, who they help, as



well as the history of the garden. During the event, music was played, grilled hot dogs and fresh produce from the garden were served, and lots of tours of the garden were given. More people attended the event than expected, which concluded with around 100 guests! Some residents didn't know what OSP was so showing them the garden as beneficial to the community.

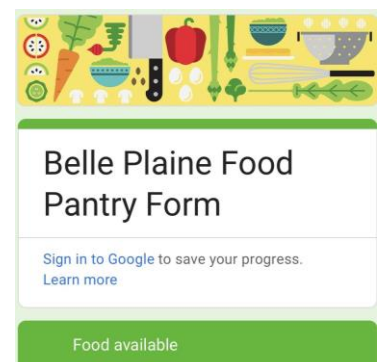
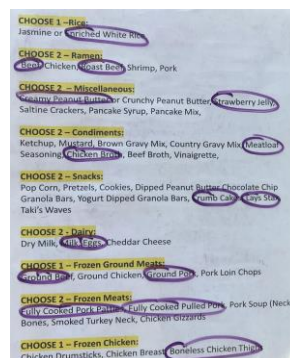
Vinton Food Pantry

In the Vinton food pantry, the head volunteer, Vicki, talked about how the pantry struggled the most with was getting things like beans, lentils, and specialty produce off the shelves. Keira worked with Brianna Montross, a dietitian for counties including Benton, to learn what can be done to get these nutritious dense foods off the shelves; using tools like recipe cards and food sampling and the recommended way to do this. Keira did a couple of different tastings which included dried beans, which was turned into salsa, and fresh kohlrabi. This did very well, lots of samples were taken, which resulted in 7 bags of dried beans taken, and all of the kohlrabi taken. Although this is a busy food pantry items like these can be difficult to get off of shelves, and fresh food can go bad after a shorter period of time. Showing workers from food pantries what can be done to combat wasted shelf space is very beneficial, and can allow more nutrient food to get pushed into the hands of food pantry recipients. Keira was able to build strong relationships with food pantry workers and recipients which bettered the town of Vinton.



Belle Plaine Food Pantry

In Belle Plaine, a special project was highlighted to Keira at the beginning of the summer. The pantry uses the "client choice" method for their clients. Because of this, it was difficult to keep up with the changing papers. The head volunteers could spend more time on HACAP, and less on papers and switching to an online method. To save time to help build relationships between volunteers and clients, and to cut down on paper waste, Keira created a Google Form listing food items available. With Google it allows the form to be updated quickly and easily. At the end of this summer, They were able to start using them in the pantry, reaching about 30 people a week. Additionally, this form is a good starting point for other pantries to use if more pantries started to convert to client choice.



Linn County:

Grandstand Proposal

The Linn County Fairgrounds located in Central City, Iowa hosts a county fair every year in June. The fair attracts many people for livestock shows, contests, food, and mostly, grandstand events. Currently, a variety of events take place at the grandstand such as concerts, a truck and tractor pull, donkey races, etc.

The grandstands are outdated, unsafe, and unable to cater to the growing fair's grandstand event attendance. However, building an entire new grandstand requires a design plan and fundraising.

Throughout the summer, I worked with many fair association members to gain insight on what the new grandstand should look like. I compiled those ideas into one design and used that to create visuals to present to the fair board. The fair board can utilize visuals to start fundraising.



Objectives

- Create a conceptual architectural plan of a new grandstand at the Linn County Fairgrounds
- Discuss the project with a variety of people to gather information from multiple perspectives.
- Incorporate design criteria established by the fair board and association.
- Utilize community resources to
- Provide a series of imagery to aid in the visualization of the project for the fair board, community members, and fundraising purposes

Process

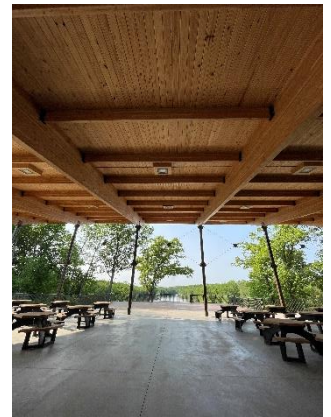
Design projects involve lots of brainstorming and ideation. In order to complete the project to the best of their abilities, Lila and Keira created a design plan to achieve their project objectives. They would start by researching precedent projects to start generating ideas for a new grandstand design. Then, they would meet with individuals in the community and fair association to gain an understanding of what people thought could be changed about the current structure. Lila and Keira would also work at the Linn County Fair to observe grandstand events to analyze the flow of people in and out of an event and even hear comments from the public. Lila took the lead on creating visuals based on the research, resources, and observations done throughout the summer.

Research

At the beginning of the project, Lila and Keira did quite a bit of research that would later influence the final design. There are many grandstand structures in surrounding counties that I used as a baseline. They also had the opportunity to meet with many individuals to hear what they would like to see in the design.

- **President Projects:** When meeting with the fair board to discuss the project as a whole, they gave Lila a few existing projects to use as inspiration for the new grandstand design. She took it upon herself to visit these sites and analyze their design and functionality. One project she

observed was the Overlook Pavilion at Pinicon Ridge Park in Central City, Iowa. Lila was able to meet with the architect of this project to learn more about it. This was a great opportunity to network with a local architecture firm and ask questions to aid my project.



- **Fairground Tours:** Lila visited the Cedar, Jones, and Benton County fairs to tour their facilities. It was interesting to see the differences between each of the facilities and how they served different purposes for each fair. It was great to meet with fair staff in surrounding counties to discuss their grandstand facilities. This also gave Lila insight into how it might be to meet with clients in her future career.

- **Fair Association:** There are many moving pieces to make a fair function smoothly. Lila and Keira met with a variety of association members to discuss the current grandstand.



Some of these members included: the events manager, board president, beer pavilion committee members, grandstand committee members, groundskeeper, and the sound production crew.

- **Individual:** In addition to using their in-person resources, Lila and Keira did individual research to better their project. Topics such as grandstand capacity, seating measurements, accessibility standards, and cost of materials were unfamiliar and needed some additional online research.

Fair Week

The Linn County Fair took place June 28th to July 2nd. They host a variety of events in the grandstand that attract members of the local community and many surrounding communities as well. Lila and Keira spent time during the fair observing the various grandstand events to better understand how the facility is used. Both Lila and Keira had never attended the Linn County Fair before and therefore didn't know how the grandstand looked while in use. They were able to experience firsthand all of the things they previously discussed with the fair association.



Spotlight

Sound Crew Interview

Before the Friday night concert, Lila and Kiera had the opportunity to

Before the Friday night concert, Lila and Keira had the opportunity to meet with the sound production people to discuss what they would look for in a grandstand.

Currently, they set up the sound panels in the main walkway on the grandstands and take up quite a few bleacher seats.

Lila asked what their ideal setup would look like and they gave some great feedback.

Members of the crew were very excited to talk about their ideal setup because they didn't often get to give their input to anyone. Lila thought this discussion was very insightful and productive as they gave her a clear vision and actual measurements of what they would like to see in her design. This was a great experience for Lila and the sound crew!



Design Criteria

Based on the information gathered from research and during the fair. Lila created a list of design criteria that would outline and guide her design. All of these factors needed to be addressed to create a functional design that would benefit the many working parts of the fair:

- **Capacity:** The fair is growing so they need a grandstand to hold larger crowds.
- **Circulation:** flow of people in and out of the grandstand and emergency exits
- **Space Utilization Underneath Grandstands:** bathrooms, concessions, storm refuge, storage, etc.
- **Sound and Light Implementation:** For concerts where will the sound and light setup be?
- **Versatility of the Space:** What other events can be hosted here when the fair is not going on?
- **Seating Types:** There is a need for handicap seating and potentially VIP seating.
- **Project Phases:** Recommend phases for the project, as it will be completed over many years.

The goal of this project was to design a grandstand that will serve events during the fair and will also serve as a multipurpose venue year-round. This can be accomplished by:

- Creating a versatile design that is fitting for events ranging from truck and tractor pulls to weddings and graduations.
- Allowing for a large amount of seats and many different types of seating.
- Utilizing wide walkways and multiple entrances to decrease congestion and to function in the case of emergency evacuation.
- Refining details such as sponsorship sign placement, connection to the adjacent beer pavilion, sound booth location during concerts, and the utilization of space underneath the grandstand.
- Considering environmental factors such as cooling and acoustics

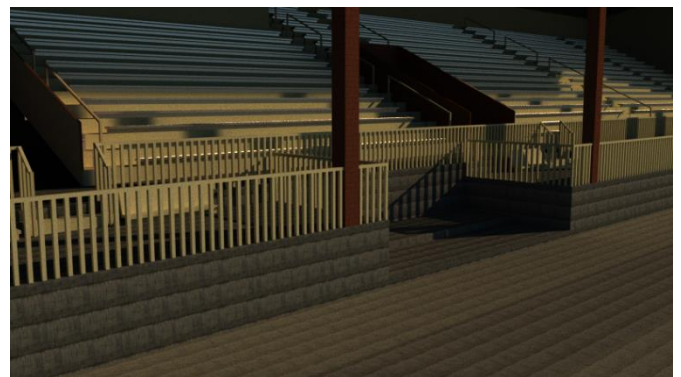
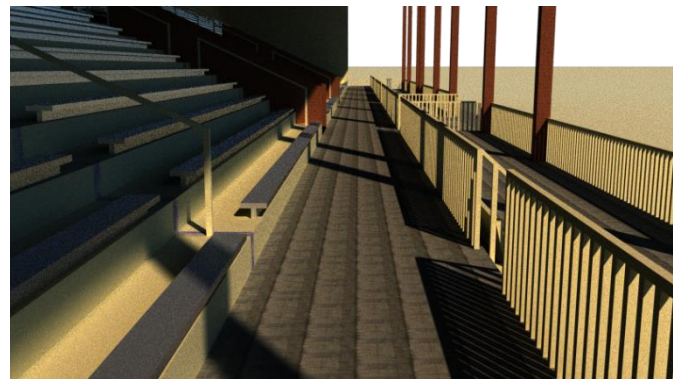
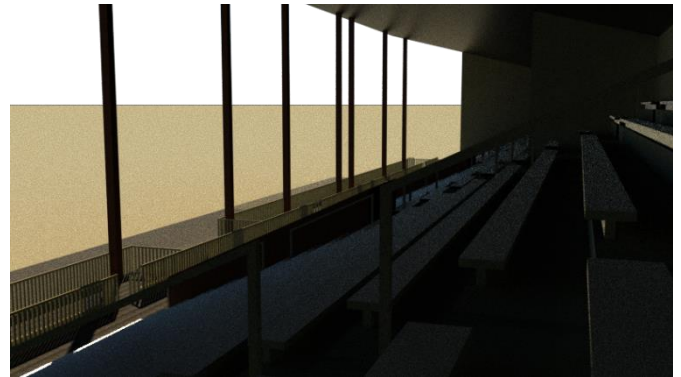


Area	Notes
Grandstand	Main seating area
Walkways	Multiple entrances and exits
Concessions	Located underneath the grandstand
Bathrooms	Located underneath the grandstand
Storage	Located underneath the grandstand
Storm Refuge	Located underneath the grandstand



Results

Towards the end of the summer, Lila and Keira were able to combine all the ideas they gained from the fair board, research, and attending the fair to create a design plan to present to the fair board. Lila created 10 renderings as well as supplemental maps to explain thoughts for other considerations such as circulation, phases, capacity, sound setup, entrances/exits, etc. Lila presented these images to the fair board with a supplemental report to highlight all the research and ideas they collected throughout the summer. Being unfamiliar with the Linn County Fair, Lila and Kiera were able to provide an outsider's perspective that was very valuable to the fair board. This project not only resulted in the first step in a new grandstand in Linn County, but worked to unify the fair board and provide an unbiased view of the project.



Reflections

Keira: During my time as a Rising Star intern, I have found a lot of learning experiences aside from nutrition and gardening. I have so much learned about myself, my work style, small-town communities, leadership, and pure kindness that comes from residents in the counties of Iowa. This internship is something that I will never forget and use as a resource for my future career. I've had the privilege to work alongside so many great people in the world of extension, and it has inspired me to make a difference in the world around me. Greg Walston and Brianna Montross were extremely helpful in navigating this project and were excellent resources for any of my questions. My favorite part of this internship was working with the REM Group and seeing the smiles on their faces when we came to visit them. Thank you to everyone who made this such an amazing experience for this year's rising stars!

Lila: When I first learned about this internship, I was very interested in the opportunities it had to offer. In my future career, I will work with many people so the more experience I have working in an interdisciplinary team, the better. I was very interested in this specific project because it combines two of my interests: design, because I am an Architecture student, and the fair atmosphere, because I used to show animals at my county fair. My goal for this internship was to gain experience with an architectural project that will eventually be implemented in real life. I had the opportunity to conduct my own research by networking with a variety of people, then gathering that information to make an informed design. This was a unique experience because I was able to work with a very diverse group of people. The fair association is full of community members with very different backgrounds and different roles at the fair, meaning they all gave me very different insights. Navigating through this project refined my interpersonal skills in addition to my design skills. I will be able to add my work as a Rising Star Intern to my growing portfolio. I am excited to apply the knowledge and experiences I have learned this summer to my future education and career. Thank you to all of those who served as a resource and guided me throughout the summer.

ISU Extension and Outreach Rising Star Internship Program

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Appendices

[Vinton Today- Garden Party Article](#)

[KCRG Interview](#)

[Rising Star Blog](#)

[Summer Science Discovery Camp](#)

[Linn County Fair](#)