

Women, Land & Legacy



Women, Land & Legacy News

February 2022

New WLL Chapters in 2022!

In the last year, a number of Iowa counties have shown interest in becoming active with Women Land and Legacy (WLL) and several are now taking steps to make it happen!

The newest WLL chapters are the Winneshiek County WLL Chapter and WLL of Southern Iowa (Adams, Ringgold, Taylor and Union counties). They have developed diverse, effective local teams and are planning their upcoming Listening Sessions.

The Winneshiek County team met at Luther College in December to start planning their future. To best meet the needs of their communities, two Learning Sessions will be held in two different locations in the county. The first will take place at Wildberry Winery in Decorah on March 22 and the second at the Spillville Public Library on March 31. The team continues to meet monthly as they plan the upcoming sessions.

Sophia Campbell, Yellow River Headwaters Project Coordinator in Winneshiek County and co-WLL Local Team Lead shares, “I found out through conversations with women SWCD Commissioners and watershed project coordinator Megan Giorgenti that there is so much we can learn from one another and connections that we can make with other professionals working in conservation in Iowa, especially other women. We decided we wanted to create connections and engage local women landowners and farmers to participate in conservation and/or farm programs and to also empower young female farmers. After learning about WLL from Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen and the program’s mission, we knew that forming a WLL Chapter in our county would be a perfect fit.”

The WLL of Southern Iowa team met at the ISU Extension office in Creston on Feb. 8 to begin planning their Listening Sessions. Two sessions will be held on June 1 at different times to accommodate farm, work, and family schedules.

One session will be held in the afternoon and the second in the evening at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in Lenox. The team continues to communicate and meet regularly as they plan the sessions.

Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, NRCS State Outreach Coordinator will facilitate the Listening Sessions, as local agricultural women provide valuable input that will guide the future their WLL programming. With this first event that is conducted in each WLL chapter, the local networking begins and the opportunity for women’s empowerment and confidence-building is experienced.

Jodi Hitz, WLL Local Team Lead for WLL of Southern Iowa and the Project Coordinator for the North Thompson Watershed Project and Project Coordinator for ISU Extension, both in Union County shares her excitement, “As the planning committee has talked with people in our area, there is so much excitement and desire for this chance to learn and discuss together. Farming can be so isolating; I think we’re all looking forward to connecting with other like-minded women and seeing where the program goes.”

Counties that are interested in becoming an active WLL chapter should contact Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen at tanya.meyer@usda.gov with questions and/or for assistance.



Could Your WLL Chapter Benefit from a “Renewal”?

Several existing WLL Chapters have identified a need for a “renewal” in the form of a Partner Listening Session. There may be several reasons for this: members leaving the local team for a variety of reasons, COVID implications, loss of interest, or just needing some assistance to move forward. Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, NRCS State Outreach Coordinator assisted requesting chapters with this renewal process in January 2022.

Lydia Whitman, IDALS-DSCWQ Conservation Assistant in Cedar County and the WLL Local Team Lead for the Cedar, Johnson, Muscatine, Scott WLL Chapter, shared this regarding the chapter’s renewal session, “I’m so thankful for the partners that took the time to join in the conversation and planning for our WLL group. Their feedback and enthusiasm was just what we needed to reinvigorate this mission! The results of the session will be used as a jumping off point for much of this year’s planning.”

During a “renewal” session, existing and new local team members come together to revisit or learn about the history of the specific WLL chapter and what led to the need for such a session. The attendees also learn about WLL from a general and statewide perspective, then participate in a facilitated conversation in which they respond to designed questions. The responses lead to their local vision for future accomplishments and what each team member can provide to help realize that vision. The session concludes by determining next steps with specific actions and dates.

“It really is exciting to see WLL teams that were very active, then became much less active beginning in 2020, renew their enthusiasm for WLL through these sessions!” says Meyer-Dideriksen. “It offers a tremendous opportunity to really dig in and brainstorm what they want to do for the local agricultural women in their communities and the role that each team member plays to achieve this. I think most WLL chapters are anxious to move forward and some may just need a little assistance to do so. It’s my responsibility to provide that assistance and I’m thrilled to do it.”

What is gained by “renewing” a WLL Local Team?

- Local Team reconnection and renewal of energy and enthusiasm.
- Addition of new members to the team.
- Determination of chapter needs and contributions that can be made by each team member.
- Encouragement and support to move forward and plan events.



“Partner Listening Session” WLL renewal for the Cedar, Johnson, Muscatine, Scott WLL Chapter January 11, 2022.

Nichole Baxter, NRCS Resource Conservationist in Jasper County and the WLL Local Team Lead for the Mahaska and Marion WLL Chapter, shared her feelings about the January 24 session held for this chapter, “I think we took a great step forward with the ladies that attended the session. I am proud of our group. We all have become very close. Thank you for your support and helping us take this major first step toward getting back out there and working with our local women and communities.”

Additional WLL Local Teams that may benefit from such a session should contact Meyer-Dideriksen at tanya.meyer@usda.gov to inquire and/or schedule a “renewal” session.

Women on the Trail and On the Farm

Iowa PBS, Written for Iowa Pathways by Tom Morain



Iowa pioneer women played an important role in the early settlement of the state. The rural Midwest was settled in a different way than many other areas where the first arrivals were fur trappers or cowboys or miners and where men outnumbered women in the early

population. In Iowa, most people came to farm the rich soil and they came as families. Wives and daughters were an essential part of the farming operation.

Women shared their husbands' enthusiasm for getting started in a new land. One historian identifies four major roles of women as they prepared for the trip to Iowa: to pack sufficient food for the journey; to provide sufficient clothing and bedding; to stock up on necessary medicines that may be needed (women served as family doctors before trained physicians); and to sew a canvas top for the wagon.

When the family reached their new home in Iowa, women worked hard to care for the family, with the biggest task to help feed them. Women planted large gardens with a great variety of vegetables. They preserved foods like potatoes, carrots, and turnips by storing them in root cellars, cabbage was made into sauerkraut, and cucumbers were pickled in vinegar. Apples, pumpkins, and squash were cut into small pieces and dried. When canning jars became available, women preserved even more vegetables, such as corn, green beans, and tomatoes.



Farm women in Iowa raised large flocks of chickens. The eggs were an important part of the family's diet. Also, chicken, geese, ducks, and turkeys provided a year-round source of meat. To preserve the meat, women cut it up into smaller pieces and sometimes smoked it in a smokehouse. They also packed it into large crocks to prevent air from reaching it, canned it or made sausage. The animal fat was used as lard or to make soap.

Most families had milk cows, which the children milked morning and night. The milk was set aside to allow the cream to rise, so the women could skim off the cream and churn it into butter. The skim milk was fed to the hogs.

Many Iowa women took pleasure in making beautiful quilts for the beds. They designed their own patterns and often used worn out clothing to make them. Quilts were practical, but also almost the only opportunity for women to express their artistic abilities.

Women's work was essential to running a farm and maintaining a household. Farming was a partnership between husband and wife, each with his or her responsibilities. Because Iowa was a farming frontier, women were an important part of life on the frontier as well as on the established farms.

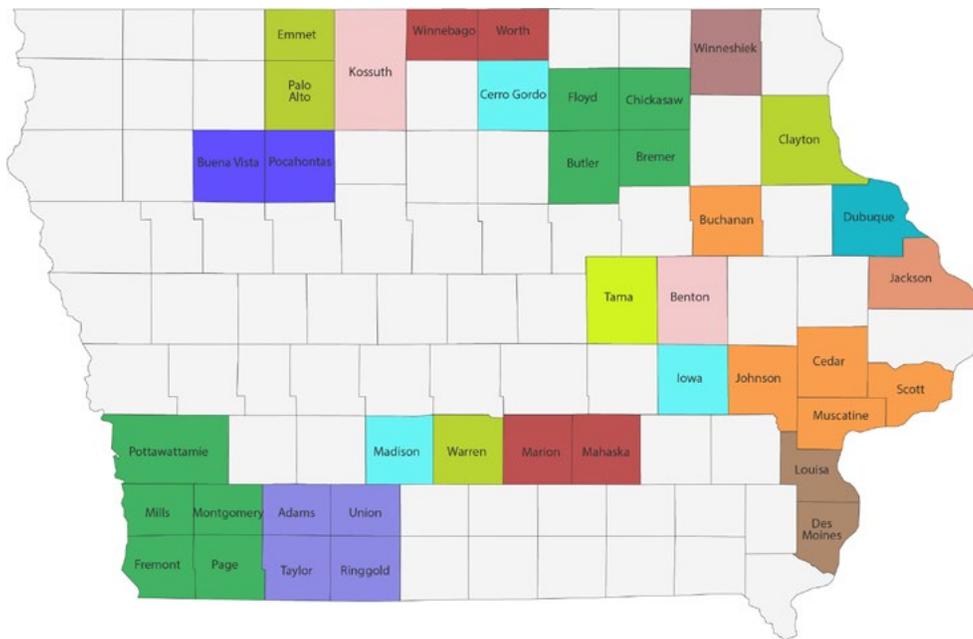
OPPORTUNITIES

Des Moines/Louisa WLL Chapter “Leave a Legacy – Not an Inheritance” on 3/1/22 with two identical sessions from 9-11am or 1-3pm at the Clover Creek Even Venue in Mediapolis, IA. Strategies for farm transition and estate planning. RSVP by 2/25 to 319-237-3971 or Jamie.stewart@usda.gov. Free event.

Cedar/Johnson/Muscatine/Scott WLL Chapter “March Brunch & Learn” on 3/4/22 from 10am-12pm at Oasis Coffee Shop in Tipton, IA. Gain insight about stress on the farm and updates from USDA-NRCS and USDA-FSA. RSVP to 563-886-6214 X3 or Lydia.whitman@usda.gov. Free event.

WLL of SW Iowa “Women Gaining Ground” conference on 3/5/22 from 8am – 3pm at the Glenwood Senior High School in Glenwood, IA. Variety of keynote and breakout presenters. Register (\$35) by 2/25 to any of the following Extension offices: Fremont 712-374-2351, Mills 712-624-8616, or Page 712-542-5171.

Iowa Counties with WLL Teams



About Women, Land and Legacy

Women, Land & Legacy (WLL) is a USDA-sponsored education and outreach program impacting thousands of Iowa women connected to agriculture. Working at the county level and utilizing dialogue, learning sessions and networking opportunities, WLL empowers women and provides resources for decision-making that impacts women’s land, families and community.



Connect With Us

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Want to Start WLL in Your County?

Contact your local NRCS, FSA, SWCD or Extension Office.

Or Contact Tanya Meyer Dideriksen, NRCS Outreach Coordinator, at tanya.meyer@usda.gov.