

*Women, Land & Legacy*



Women, Land and Legacy News

October 2022

## FY23 Shows Plans for More Women, Land and Legacy Events and Expansion

As federal fiscal year 2022 (FY22) closes out September 30, we look back and celebrate the year in which Women, Land and Legacy (WLL) began to look a little more normal since the beginning of the pandemic. Let's celebrate those WLL chapters that conducted Learning Sessions for the women in their communities! Let's also celebrate the five new counties that became active WLL chapters in 2022!

During FY22, ten WLL chapters (22 counties) held 30 Learning Sessions that benefited 701 participants by providing information and resources about a variety of agriculture and conservation topics. Some of the topics we saw in FY22 included: Pollinators, Soil Health, Woodlands, Ag Stress Management, Managing Farmland, Estate and Transition Planning, FSA Programs, Conservation Programs, Alternative Agriculture, Farm Accounting, Organic Gardening, Farm Regeneration and Reconnecting with WLL. There were also the fun AND educational sessions such as a Spruce Tip Workshop, Hydroponics, and the Succulent Workshop.

Additionally, two new WLL chapters (5 counties) were formed and held Listening Sessions that involved over 80 women.

As we look to FY23, this trend is expected to continue and even expand. Learning Sessions are already scheduled for early in the fiscal year and plans are in place for additional sessions later on.

A new chapter (2 counties) began planning in FY22, with the intention to hold their Listening Session in early 2023 and several other counties are considering becoming active. Additionally, several current chapters plan to "restart" their efforts with new Listening Sessions in FY23.

There are some lingering pandemic concerns, although, as some regions of the state are experiencing low participation at events (not just WLL events). This is something the WLL State Team will be looking further into and seeking assistance to understand effective coping strategies. Life is and always will be different post-pandemic and it will be important to understand how to effectively adjust to the new normal.

Counties interested in learning more about WLL or becoming active may contact NRCS State Outreach Coordinator, Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen at [tanya.meyer@usda.gov](mailto:tanya.meyer@usda.gov).



*Allie Rath, Senior Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Iowa, shared her knowledge of native plants and pollinator habitat during a recent Tama WLL Chapter Learning Session.*

**Quotes from Congresswoman Ashley Hinson about WLL (during a WLL visit on a Tama County farm):**

- **“This is the best kept secret (not so secret) of women’s agriculture, having seen the camaraderie that exists between women, and even the men, who are involved in this. The programming seems robust and continually evolving.”**
- **“I think it’s a win-win for Iowa agriculture. A lot of the areas I have focused on, next generation of farmers including women, conservation practices, taxes. Those are all things they’re (WLL) focused on, providing valuable programming to farmers. I’m happy to talk about how we can help grow the program and get this information to as many women as possible. The program’s high quality, the interest is there and there’s great opportunity to get good information in front of a lot of people.”**

**Prairie Passion Earns Irvine 2022 Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year**

*From article by Jason Johnson, State Public Affairs Specialist with Iowa NRCS, August 2022*

Like many widowed farmwives, Cathy Irvine of rural Dysart was overwhelmed with what to do with her farm after the death of her husband, David, in 2016. After considering what he would have wanted and their shared passion, Irvine donated 77 acres of her 460-acre farm to be restored to native prairie.

Irvine’s generosity and commitment to creating wildlife habitat contributed to her being named the 2022 Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year, as voted by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Federal Women’s Program Committee.

Dr. Laura Jackson, Director of the Tallgrass Prairie Center and Professor of Biology at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) nominated Irvine – a retired special education teacher for the Waterloo Community Schools.

It was Dr. Jackson who Irvine first contacted about donating land to create a prairie on her farm. Jackson says she was impressed with the habitat Cathy had

already established around her home. “Cathy has participated in ‘citizen science’ efforts to understand the migration of the monarch butterfly,” she said, “The grove of black walnuts and other trees surrounding her house is a haven for the monarchs as they migrate each fall. Her extensive flower beds, vegetable garden and beehives contribute to the beauty of the acreage.”

Dr. Jackson recommended Irvine work with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) – a non-profit land trust that routinely helps protect and restore Iowa lands. Irvine gifted the 77 acres to the UNI Foundation after INHF established a permanent conservation easement on it.

The Tallgrass Prairie Center began restoring the donated prairie in 2018 and will continue the long-term management of what is now called Irvine Prairie.

Irvine says her goal for the prairie, which is open to the public, is to be educational. “Having the university involved with the research and students being a part of it – even at the high school and elementary levels – is a natural fit for me,” she said.



*Cathy Irvine, of rural Dysart, was recently named the 2022 Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year.*

Earlier this year, Irvine donated a wooded, 2-acre parcel of land to the city of Dysart for the creation of the Viola Irvine Nature Preserve. She has been working with the city’s tree board to clean it up and develop a trail for public access.

She recently announced she would donate an additional 220 acres to the UNI Foundation to be restored and managed by the Tallgrass Prairie Center. The INHF will once again establish a conservation easement on the property. “It has been a joy to work with Cathy to pursue our common vision of a place where people can come to see what Iowa once looked like, prior to European settlement,” said Jackson. “We are learning something new every year and enjoy how the prairie changes constantly.”

# Women in Agriculture – What They Bring to the Table

From March 2020 online article by Anco on <https://www.anco.net>

Research shows the majority of farmland in Iowa owned by women was purchased (69%) rather than inherited (27%). This means that for most women farmers, they have made the choice to farm and they go “all in”. According to the research, the following are motivations for women: farming is a personal aspiration, they had dreamt of farming for many years and wanted to be in control of their operations.

**Passionate about the food they bring to the table.** Women are not only passionate about nourishing their own families in a healthy way, but also their communities and the world. They also share their passion on social media. The 2019 U.S. Women in Ag survey showed that 95% of women out of 3000 respondents frequently advocate for the agriculture industry. Since for most women, the farm was not passed down to them, the result is an incredible amount of passion going into food production.

**Thrive on 3 Big C’s.** Women have an enormous willingness to not only **communicate** but also to **connect** and **collaborate**. They connect on social media, at women’s conferences, and networks to offer each other emotional support, share information and experiences.



Rebecca Dostal, Tama County farmer, is shown here with some of her cattle. Rebecca is also a long-time member of the Tama WLL Chapter local team.

**Fresh perspective can make a big difference in farming.** Women can bring useful off-farm skills to farming which can help to diversify the business or enhance financial resilience of it. They are less likely to have the attitude, “Why change? It’s always been that way.” Women are more likely to be willing to try new things on the

farm and can be catalysts for change.

**A drive to diversify farms.** Research suggests that women in U.S. agriculture are more likely to be found in farm operations that add value to agriculture. Reports reveal that farm diversification is a very female-led domain.



Nancy Brannaman, Johnson County farmer, owns and operates The Lavender Farm at Sutliff, with her husband. She recently hosted a WLL event on the farm where she grows lavender, a variety of berries and flowers.

**Level of education.** A study by the Food and Agricultural Education Information System in the U.S. showed that undergraduate women enrolled in agriculture programs have been outnumbering undergraduate men. Women coming to work in agriculture, whether it be farming or service companies or government, are often highly educated in this field.

**The future for women in agriculture.** As agriculture is evolving and becoming less dependent on heavy labor, the potential contribution women can make to agriculture is increasing and so are opportunities for them. There are still barriers to women in agriculture, however, there is a shift toward a more inclusive future in agriculture.



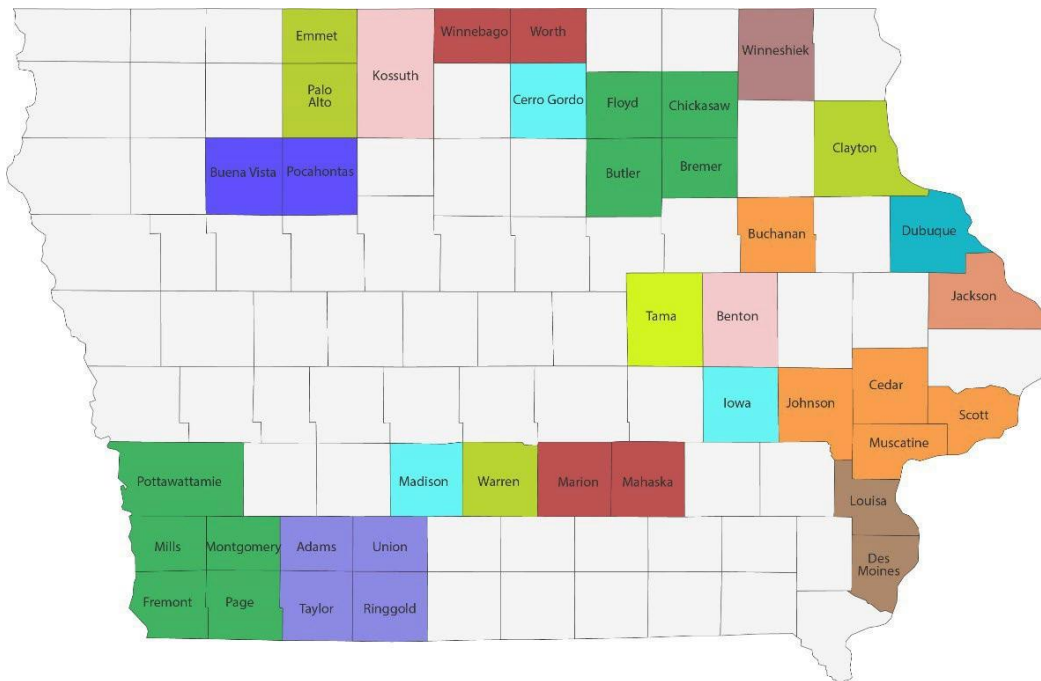
Two farm women sharing information at a 2021 Tama County WLL event.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

Mahaska-Marion WLL Chapter “Woodland Walk”: October 20 at Quercus Wildlife Area, Oskaloosa from 1-4pm. Bailey Yotter, Forester with National Wild Turkey Federation, will share her woodland knowledge. RSVP to [Nichole.baxter@usda.gov](mailto:Nichole.baxter@usda.gov) or 641-531-7090.

Winneshiek WLL Chapter “Women Managing Woodlands”: October 25 at Fern Hollow, 1591 Manawa Trail Rd., Decorah from 1-4pm. Learn about woodland management practices and resources. Maximum of 20 due to limited parking. RSVP by Oct. 21 to [Sophia.campbell@ia.nacdnet.net](mailto:Sophia.campbell@ia.nacdnet.net) or 563-382-4352 X3.

**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](mailto:tanya.meyer@usda.gov).