

october 2025

ecia spotlight

Over the Edge for a Good Cause

Community Solutions of Eastern Iowa (CSEI) is a nonprofit under the ECIA umbrella with a mission to help individuals and families survive and exit homelessness. Team CSEI, Christine Efferding (pictured to the right) and CSEI board member Sam Wooden (shown below), took the plunge in the United Way of the Dubuque Area Tri-States annual fundraiser, Over the Edge, September 12th. They joined 72 other rappellers for a great cause!

Thanks to everyone who made a donation and came out to cheer them on. Your support makes an impact.



Government Shutdown news continues to flow in and none of us are completely certain what people and programs will be affected or for how long. We know this can be a stressful time, but as of right now, ECIA is fully operational, and all programs continue to function. If you have any questions about any projects your community is working on with our team, don't hesitate to contact your program manager for assistance.

The Cost of a Free Building

“Free” Building? Think Again—Hidden Costs Could Surprise You

A “free” old building might sound like a dream. But before you take the keys, it’s important to know the real costs. Even without a purchase price, you’ll have legal fees, insurance, and—most importantly—expenses tied to what comes next.

Thinking About Demolition?

Tearing down an old building isn’t as simple as it looks. By law, an asbestos inspection by a certified professional is required before demolition. If asbestos is found, it must be removed and disposed of safely. Sometimes, the building is too unsafe to inspect or remove asbestos properly—meaning the entire structure must be treated as hazardous material. Every worker must be certified, and all debris disposed of carefully.

On top of that, utilities—gas, water, electric, sewer—must be safely disconnected, and the site must be leveled and stabilized to prevent erosion. Even a “simple demolition” can be costly and time-consuming.

Planning a Renovation?

Maybe you’ve inherited an old school, hospital, or store that looks solid at first glance. Renovating to bring it back to life can preserve community history—but surprises often lurk inside. Roofs leak, foundations crack, plumbing fails, electrical systems age, and HVAC systems may not work.

Before moving in desks, counters, or equipment, it’s wise to have a professional inspection by a building inspector, engineer, or architect. All deficiencies should be fixed, ideally to current building codes or beyond.

Iowa law also requires an asbestos inspection before renovating non-residential buildings—or residential buildings with four or more units. If asbestos is found, certified removal is required before work can continue.

Environmental and Safety Checks

Many lenders also require a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to research past uses of the property. If potential issues are found, a Phase II assessment may test for hazards like contaminated soil or groundwater. Other common checks include radon testing (mitigation recommended above 4.0 pCi/L) and lead-based paint inspections—especially if converting to housing.

The Bottom Line

Between inspections, environmental studies, renovations, and city fees, that “free” building can quickly cost hundreds of thousands of dollars—or more.

Before you take ownership, call ECIA. We can help you understand the risks, navigate regulations, and explore funding opportunities to make your project successful.

That ‘free’
building could
cost you more
than you
think—call
ECIA first!



2025 Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp

Registration closes Tuesday, October 21 for the 2025 Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp, happening October 28–29 at Simpson College in Indianola.

This is a must-attend event for anyone passionate about leadership development—whether you’re growing your own skills or working to build a stronger leadership pipeline in your community. From practical breakout sessions to peer connections and hands-on resources, the Exchange offers fresh energy and real tools for local impact.

View the full event packet [here](#)

Register now: <https://2025leadershipexchange.eventbrite.com>

Don’t miss your chance to join this incredible network of community builders, program leaders, and rural champions!

Do People Know They’ve Arrived?

Believe it or not, “Welcome” signs are important for small towns because they establish a distinct identity, provide a positive first impression for visitors, and contribute to a sense of pride, place, and community among residents. Depending on the size and type of sign, it can be a low-cost way to achieve all of the above. Also keep in mind about putting signs at all of your entrances into town, not just the main “front door” entrances. You wouldn’t want to risk someone missing the opportunity to experience your community.



Ryan Feller
September 15

Welcome back Ryan!

Ryan Feller assists the Housing Department with Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) case management and inspections, as well as the Family-Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. HCV is a federal rental assistance program that helps very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities afford safe and decent housing. FSS is a federal initiative that helps families receiving housing assistance achieve economic independence by increasing their earned income, building financial assets, and reducing reliance on welfare and housing subsidies. Ryan comes to us from the City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development Dept. where she worked with both the HCV and FSS programs. She was also employed previously by ECIA and worked with the homeless and lead programming.

Cedar County Economic Development:

ECIA recently contracted with Cedar County to manage the economic development activities and community engagement in the county. Holly McPherson (pictured on the back page) will be the lead on this initiative.

Holy Cross Hometown Proud

The Holy Cross Hometown Pride Committee (HPC) celebrated checking two major projects off their list in August. The community raised \$44,000 during their 2024 Holy Cross Days annual festival and dedicated the funding to the HPC in support of the projects they were spearheading.

A \$12,000 AARP Community Challenge grant award paired with local funding supported the demolition of the town's aging tennis court and replaced it with an all new tennis court, incorporating two pickleball courts.

The HPC also saw their vision of a signature Holy Cross mural become reality. The group of volunteers collaborated with an artist to professionally design a mural that celebrates the identity, history, and cultural pride of Holy Cross by incorporating the town's most iconic images. Among these is the famous image of a ghost player emerging from a cornfield onto the Field of Dreams baseball field in Dyersville. This image holds special meaning for the town, as the ghost player depicted is Holy Cross native Hank Lucas, who was cast as one of the original ghost players in the Field of Dreams film.



Holy Cross Mayor, Brian Maiers shared, "The new tennis court and two pickle-ball courts are great assets to the city and people of all ages who use them. The mural is a wonderful addition to the city and gives residents and former residents one more reason to be proud of our town. Both of these projects were made possible by our Park Club and the Hometown Pride Committee; two groups of local volunteers who want to make Holy Cross better than it already is."

To celebrate their accomplishments, the Hometown Pride Committee held separate ribbon cutting events.



Holy Cross was also recently awarded a \$430,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for an improved water distribution system and sanitary sewer system for the Highland Court subdivision. The project will benefit 16 households.

Speed Feedback Sign Program

Speed management is a significant challenge for small cities in Iowa where the state highway through town serves a dual role. Outside of town, the roadway provides high-speed travel over long distances. But within the community, the same roadway accommodates local access, pedestrians of all ages, on-street parking, bicycles, and many other features unique to the character of a community. All of this presents both an enforcement challenge and a potential safety concern for the local residents.

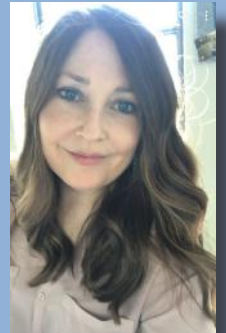
Speed feedback signs are proven traffic calming devices that can be placed along state highways within a community through this program. Incorporated cities with a population between 750 and 15,000 that are located along one or more state highways. Eligibility requirements may be relaxed in future years.

For more information on the program, visit <https://iowadot.gov/modes-travel/roads-highways/highway-safety-features/speed-feedback-signs>.

CSEI was recently awarded a \$80,600 Iowa Finance Authority Iowa Homeless Prevention Fund grant to address the immediate housing needs of families at risk of homelessness by assisting households who may be ineligible for traditional resources.

Welcome Chelle!

Chelle Klootwyk works with the Community Solutions of Eastern Iowa (CSEI) team on fundraising, donor relations, event planning, and other administrative tasks, like coordinating the Care & Share initiative for Homelessness Awareness month, highlighted below. Chelle also assists the ECIA administrative department, assisting the executive director with executing the strategic plan as well as providing administrative support for the ECDC/ECIA EXEC/ECIA Council meetings.



Chelle Klootwyk
July 25

Care & Share

November is homelessness awareness month, and CSEI is asking for your help to address the urgent needs of our area's most vulnerable population.

Support those in our community who are living outside, as well as those who are transitioning from the street into a home of their own, by contributing to CSEI's Care & Share program.

What we're looking for: backpacks, full-size hygiene items, insulated sleeping bags, tents, tarps, cleaning supplies and adult insulated gloves. Visit www.cseiowa.org for more information.

Direct purchase can be made online at tinyurl.com/cesiwish2025.

Collection Sites

November 1st – 30th

Asbury City Hall
5290 Grand Meadow Dr.,
Asbury

Dubuque Eagles Club
11175 Century Dr.,
Dubuque

Sisters of the Presentation
2360 Carter Rd., Dubuque

B1 Yoga Studio
185 Main St., Dubuque

Premier Bank (3 locations)
2625 NW Arterial
1975 JFK Rd
9th & Iowa., Dubuque

Manchester Public Library
304 N. Franklin St.,
Manchester

Hopkinton City Hall
115 1st St SE, Hopkinton

NOVEMBER IS HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS MONTH

Make a direct monetary donation today!



**GIVE A LITTLE.
HELP A LOT.**

WWW.CSEIOWA.ORG

in partnership with:



ECIA Anniversaries July/August/September



Maria Elgin
37 years



Carl Reimer
28 years



Mindy Meyers
25 years



Holly McPherson
23 years



Mark Jobgen
8 years



Tricia Wagner
8 years



Liz Kemp
8 years



Dawn Danielson
6 years



Ben Cooper
3 years



Amber Kelly
3 years



Sue Schall
2 years

Congratulations to these staff who recently celebrated work anniversaries. Your dedication and hard work in and for the ECIA region are truly appreciated.



Kelly Davis
August 25

Welcome Kelly!

Kelly Davis assists the Community and Economic Development department with inspections for the lead program. Kelly comes to us from the City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development Dept. where she conducted lead hazard and healthy home assessments and coordinated various construction projects.



East Central Intergovernmental Association

www.ecia.org • 7600 Commerce Park Dubuque, IA 52002 • 563-556-4166