

people can’t control where bees bring it in from and they have around a two-mile flying radius, but the end product is still great and delicious and there are also health benefits. In 2022, Kirchland Honey was named Best Tasting Honey in Iowa at the Iowa State Fair, and Madison stated the product is speaking for itself that the bees were finding good nectar sources, so it tastes good.

It was a rough winter for Madison’s hives as varroa mites infested them and she lost her bees in early November. Usually if she incurs a loss, it happens in the early spring but now she is trying to keep up on her pest management to get rid of the mites and maintain bees over the winter for next year. This year she plans to have 15 hives at the farm.

“I already ordered [my bees] in January. I ordered them out of a place in Minnesota and they have Hygienic bees. I also ordered a few hives down in central Iowa,” Madison explained. “That commercial keeper is having a really good survival rate this year so I’m going to try out his genetics and see how that works. They’ll come at the end of April. They’ll plant while I go get honeybees and I’ll install the hives here at the farm. That first week of May is a little crazy.”

There are two different ways to purchase bees, either as a nucleus or a package. Madison described a package as a bunch of bees, around 3 pounds, with a queen which is dumped into a hive and they slowly get used to the queen. The bees will let her out of the package and the queen will start laying eggs. A bee nucleus, or a nuc, is where a producer will receive three to four frames, and they place those in a hive. While those may be more expensive, she commented they are most established, and producers could have a better honey crop.

“We’ve always purchased packages and our crops have been pretty decent. This year we’re doing both because the one guy offers one and one doesn’t,” added Madison. “I am going to split them. I’m going to put eight here at the farm and then put seven down a waterway close to the pond that’s across the road just to get some separation. I just didn’t want that many in one area because I don’t know if I have enough resources.”

Usually Madison is able to get 50 to 100 pounds of honey per hive, but she thinks she could get more if she pulls the super more often. She tried it last year and it worked out, but this year

she doesn’t know how much she can put her body through as she is due with her third child mid-July and honey harvest is at the end of August. It is then sold to local customers. In 2024, Kirchland Honey was able to harvest 1,500 total pounds with around 900 pounds in the fall and the rest in January when she harvested frames after the loss of the bees.

The best day to harvest is on the hottest day where Madison will smoke the bees to keep them calm and put a fume board on top with a cherry syrup, which the bees don’t like the smell of, and it drives them down into the hive. She then takes off the whole honey box, puts it on her trailer and wheels it into one of the sheds where her husband and father will help.

“That’s about the only time I do need their help because that’s really heavy lifting. They’ll take off the wax cappings because they put a wax over top of the honey to protect it, and then we put it in a honey spinner,” commented Madison. “We spin on one side and then we’ll flip over the hive and we spin off the other side. It drains out into a bucket and we do keep one mesh cloth on top to filter out the comb, dead bees and stuff like that. It seems very simple and a lot of the time, it’s the packaging that gets you.”

Each season determines the care Madison gives her honeybees. In the spring if the bees survive, she would give them a sugar syrup ratio and feed them pollen patties to wake up the queen to start laying eggs. The bees should start collecting pollen at the beginning of spring because the flowers and dandelions are starting to grow, and the trees provide nectar as well.

“In the summertime they’re in full mode like. ‘We’re going to go get some nectar and pollen to make this honey happen.’ I don’t really do anything with them in the summer,” explained Madison. “I will make sure they have enough room to grow because we don’t want them to get squished in their hive because then they might want to leave. I’ll always be watching the queen to make sure she’s laying and she has a good laying brood pattern.”

In the fall around the Iowa State Fair is when about time to harvest the honey. Madison will pull off the honey supers which were installed in the summer and start getting the bees ready for winter. She wraps her hives with a Hive Hugger, which is an insulation system, and she has had a good success rate. Madison commented bees don’t go dormant but they cluster in the winter

and maintain a heated ball, and there have been hard years due to the varroa mites or a late winter and the bees run out of food.

There are different aspects to raising bees that surprised Madison including how they can take care of themselves. She is always worried about the queen, who is the most important bee in the hive, and there was a time where Madison knew she didn’t have a queen. She let the bees sit for a few weeks and when she came back, she surprisingly saw eggs.

“They made a new queen. I was like, ‘That’s cool, look how you guys can do that.’ The bees already know how to make a new one and they have their own process of doing that,” Madison stated. “I just worry about them in certain ways like that but in the end, they know how to take care of themselves, and they’re meant to survive.”

One of her favorite things about the bees is they do what is called bearding. It is the bees way of cooling themselves out of the hive and they fan themselves out in a beard-like shape. Madison has various water sources around the farm and she had the Sumner Public Library 3-D print a stand to give the bees something to land out in the water.

There are several challenges to owning bees including unexpected deaths, varroa mites and colony loss which can be from a disease or a pesticide kill. Madison expressed DriftWatch online is a good resource for beekeepers and farms to communicate where hives are locally and so stuff isn’t sprayed at the wrong time.

“The other is bees swarm for no reason. Swarming is when they just leave the hive. Sometimes I do catch them in a tree, but sometimes I don’t and I lost my bees,” explained Madison. “Most of the time they’re on a low hanging branch all clustered together, holding the queen in. Those are fun learning moments because your swarm is going to be your nicest bees you ever deal with because they’re just looking for a home, even though they are your bees.”

There was one time Madison was trying to put bees in a hive and she missed but the queen made it in. The bees marched right back into the hive and made a beeline for the door, which was cool for her to experience.

If people are interested in getting involved in beekeeping, some advice Madison has for them is to find a mentor. This is what helped her get some of her bees through the winter because they have the experience and know some tips and tricks after she found a mentor in Mason City.



Madison Rau (left) and her dad Danny Kirchmann check their beehives wearing their protective suits. They first became involved with honeybees in 2016 and Madison plans to have 15 hives this year. (Photo submitted)

‘Fresh, Fermented, Flavorful’ hands-on workshops planned

Four northeast Iowa counties will be offering a workshop to learn the basics of fermenting vegetables this summer. Jill Weber, a human sciences educator with Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach, will lead the workshops that will help individuals interested in learning about fermenting vegetables in small batches at home.

During the hands-on workshop, participants will:

- Explore the rich history and significance of fermented vegetables.
- Uncover the amazing health benefits of fermented foods and why they are great for gut health.
- Learn the science involved during the fermentation process and get practical tips for avoiding common fermentation problems.
- Leave with the skills and confidence to start fermenting a delicious jar of kimchi at home.

Workshops are open to everyone

and will be held at:

- Oneota Coop Kitchen, 312 W. Water St., Decorah, in Winneshiek County June 5 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
 - Fayette Co. Extension office, 218 S. Main St., Fayette, June 25 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
 - St. Patrick Church, 705 Main St., Cedar Falls, in Black Hawk County July 8 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
 - Allamakee Co. Extension office, 218 Seventh Ave. SE, Waukon, Sept. 9 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- There is a cost, and space is limited for each workshop. People should choose the date and location which works best for them and register at www.go.iastate.edu/U79SGU.
- To learn more or to ask questions, contact Weber at jrweber@iastate.edu or by phone at (319) 234-6811. People can also contact a local Extension office.

Opportunities for learning, career exploration at Iowa Youth Crop Scouting Competition

Youth teams can now register for the 2025 Youth Crop Scouting Competition, hosted by Iowa 4-H and the Iowa State University (ISU) Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. The event will be held July 24 at Wyffels Hybrids, Ames.

Middle and high school students in grades seventh through 12th are invited to put their crop scouting skills to the test, competing against other youth teams across the state. The event aims to bring awareness of IPM in Iowa and allow youth to learn IPM basics through hands-on learning and teamwork.

“Teams prepare in advance of the competition, working together to learn about pest identification, crop management and crop scouting,” stated Maya Hayslett, crop science youth education specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach and program coordinator for the Iowa Youth Crop Scouting Competition. “The competition is then a chance for them to use their critical thinking and teamwork skills to assess field con-

ditions and consider management options.”

At the event, teams rotate between different crop plots where they are evaluated on their knowledge and skills in crop scouting by answering questions and demonstrating field skills as asked by station judges. Stations are run by ISU faculty and staff and agriculture industry professionals, allowing students to work next to and learn from experts.

“The competition is a chance for them to see several different career paths related to agronomy,” Hayslett commented.

One of the youth participants remarked, “I enjoyed getting to work and interact with industry professionals and gain insight into how they identify and solve problems.”

Potential topics include crop diseases, insects, disorders, weed identification, crop growth stages, cover crops, sprayer calibration and pesticide use.

In addition to the competition,

Sourdough starter workshops scheduled in Iowa this summer

Learn the basics of baking with a sourdough starter at a sourdough workshop led by Jill Weber, health and human science educator, with Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach, in four northeast Iowa counties during the upcoming summer.

“This fun, hands-on pilot workshop will help bakers interested in learning about baking with a sourdough starter understand the unique aspects of using the starter to leaven baked products,” Weber shared.

- During the hands-on workshop, participants will:
- Learn about maintaining and using a sourdough starter.
 - Take home their own starter to continue their sourdough baking experience at home
 - Mix, stretch and fold a mini loaf, learning the essential techniques for creating the perfect loaf of bread and taking home a mini loaf to ferment and bake.
 - Taste and explore with a sample batch of fermented focaccia, discover the use of sourdough discard and an active starter.

The workshops will be offered at several locations and are open to anyone. Locations are:

- Oneota Coop Kitchen, 312 W. Water St., Decorah, in Winneshiek County May 21 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- Fayette Co. Extension office, 218 S. Main St., Fayette, June 3, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- St. Patrick Church, 705 Main St., Cedar Falls, in Black Hawk County July 1 from 4:00-6:00 p.m.
- Allamakee Co. Extension office, 218 Seventh Ave. SE #102, Waukon, Aug. 12 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

There is a cost for the workshop, and space is limited so register early. Participants can register for the workshop at www.go.iastate.edu/U79SGU.

To learn more about the workshop or for questions, contact Weber at jrweber@iastate.edu or call (319) 234-6811.

S-F Schools budget amendment

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING - AMENDMENT OF CURRENT BUDGET				
SUMNER-FREDERICKSBURG School District Fiscal Year July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025				
The SUMNER-FREDERICKSBURG School District will conduct a public hearing for the purpose of amending the current budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025				
Meeting Date/Time: 5/12/2025 05:00 PM		Contact: Kevin Seney	Phone: (563) 578-3341	
Meeting Location: Media Center, Sumner-Fredericksburg Middle School 300 East Main Street Fredericksburg, IA 50630				
There will be no increase in taxes. Any residents or taxpayers will be heard for or against the proposed amendment at the time and place specified above. A detailed statement of: additional receipts, cash balances on hand at the close of the preceding fiscal year, and proposed disbursements, both past and anticipated, will be available at the hearing. Budget amendments are subject to protest. If protest petition requirements are met, the State Appeal Board will hold a local hearing. For more information, consult https://dom.iowa.gov/local-gov-appeals .				
EXPENDITURES	Total Budget as Certified or Last Amended	Amendment Increase	Total Budget After Current Amendment	Reason
Instruction	8,026,000	225,000	8,251,000	increased instructional costs/special ed tuition
Total Support Services	4,636,489	225,000	4,861,489	increased costs to bus repairs and the purchase of 2 new buses
Noninstructional Programs	705,000	0	705,000	
Total Other Expenditures	1,989,133	0	1,989,133	
Total	15,356,622	450,000	15,806,622	

City of Sumner budget amendment

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING - AMENDMENT OF CURRENT BUDGET				
City of SUMNER				
Fiscal Year July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025				
The City of SUMNER will conduct a public hearing for the purpose of amending the current budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025				
Meeting Date/Time: 5/5/2025 06:30 PM		Contact: Lisa Oberbroeckling		Phone: (563) 578-3242
Meeting Location: Sumner City Hall Council Chambers				
There will be no increase in taxes. Any residents or taxpayers will be heard for or against the proposed amendment at the time and place specified above. A detailed statement of: additional receipts, cash balances on hand at the close of the preceding fiscal year, and proposed disbursements, both past and anticipated, will be available at the hearing. Budget amendments are subject to protest. If protest petition requirements are met, the State Appeal Board will hold a local hearing. For more information, consult https://dom.iowa.gov/local-gov-appeals .				
REVENUES & OTHER FINANCING SOURCES		Total Budget as Certified or Last Amended	Current Amendment	Total Budget After Current Amendment
Taxes Levied on Property	1	953,041	0	953,041
Less: Uncollected Delinquent Taxes - Levy Year	2	0	0	0
Net Current Property Tax	3	953,041	0	953,041
Delinquent Property Tax Revenue	4	0	0	0
TIF Revenues	5	139,000	0	139,000
Other City Taxes	6	306,423	0	306,423
Licenses & Permits	7	5,000	0	5,000
Use of Money & Property	8	65,400	11,800	77,200
Intergovernmental	9	4,662,850	0	4,662,850
Charges for Service	10	1,270,828	0	1,270,828
Special Assessments	11	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	12	13,000	39,800	52,800
Other Financing Sources	13	3,888,000	0	3,888,000
Transfers In	14	357,680	39,200	396,880
Total Revenues & Other Sources	15	11,661,222	90,800	11,752,022
EXPENDITURES & OTHER FINANCING USES				
Public Safety	16	370,482	12,000	382,482
Public Works	17	288,400	50,500	338,900
Health and Social Services	18	0	0	0
Culture and Recreation	19	395,952	45,560	441,512
Community and Economic Development	20	4,000	39,000	43,000
General Government	21	445,830	83,000	528,830
Debt Service	22	343,676	0	343,676
Capital Projects	23	7,369,200	78,000	7,447,200
Total Government Activities Expenditures	24	9,217,540	308,060	9,525,600
Business Type/Enterprise	25	894,790	106,647	1,001,437
Total Gov Activities & Business Expenditures	26	10,112,330	414,707	10,527,037
Transfers Out	27	357,680	39,200	396,880
Total Expenditures/Transfers Out	28	10,470,010	453,907	10,923,917
Excess Revenues & Other Sources Over (Under) Expenditures/Transfers Out	29	1,191,212	-363,107	828,105
Beginning Fund Balance July 1, 2024	30	1,901,324	2,460,883	4,362,207
Ending Fund Balance June 30, 2025	31	3,092,536	2,097,776	5,190,312
Explanation of Changes: Revenues increase due to SRF Sewer loan, increase of insurance rebate, and an increase to NSF reimbursements. Expenditures increased loan proceeds from SRF of the Sewer improvement project. Step Grant payroll expenses, road use- road maintenance and new debt service payments, enterprise fund expenses of repairs to the sewer grit system, influent building repairs. P&A expenses for completing the comprehensive plan. Audit fees billed from last fiscal year, legal fee increases, and increased customer NSF's.				

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