

Down to Earth Currents of Change

On July 22, Dr. Allen Shriver, Director of Well-ness and Nutrition Policy at the Harkin Institute hosted a webinar titled “Toxic Ties: What’s in our Water?” As part of the 2025 Watershed Talks, the focus of his presentation was the status of Iowa’s water quality. He highlighted the upcoming public release of a water quality report from a study commissioned by



with Drake University rather than continue the initial effort to be housed by Iowa

ing public. Such constraint would compromise a core value: “The Harkin Institute was founded on the premise that good public policy is best achieved when policy-makers have access to high quality information, political processes are open and well-understood and citizens are informed and active participants.”

Aware and alarmed by Iowa’s number two position with the highest cancer rate in the nation, the Harkin Institute, in collaboration with a number of agencies and entities, is conducting a scientific review about any correlations between cancer incidences and three ag practices: pesticide

use, water-borne nitrate levels, and PFAS contamination. Complementing the scientific review is the public outreach currently underway. The Institute is doing listening sessions in 15 different sites across the state to collect stories of lived cancer experience. An early outcome is that the public hungers for a venue where their stories can be heard.

After the recent release of Currents of Change to the Polk County Board of Supervisors, an unsurprising result was pushback by entities who wanted the results to be muted or just not publicly presented. Noting pressure to water down the information, the Harkin Institute volunteered to host an official public release at Drake University on August 4. Dr. Shriver noted that current registrations for the free event indicate the same hunger as the listening sessions mentioned above. He also indicated that a large turnout on the 4th would send a strong message to decision makers about how interested and concerned the public is about our water quality.

“Our Water Our Future: A Look at the Central Iowa Water Quality” report is available at www.polkcountyiowa.gov/public-works/water-resources/polk-county-water-quality-initiatives/. “Iowa’s water quality has been significantly impaired by both urban and rural activities. The familiar sights of pavement-filled cities and acres of corn and soybean fields are far different from the native prairies that once dominated Iowa. Historical alterations to Iowa’s landscape, along with changes in climate, have had a profound impact on the State’s water quality.”

What can an individual do in the face of such complex problems? Sometimes the most constructive action is just to show up.



shared the genesis of the Harkin Institute’s increasing focus on industrial agriculture’s impact upon public health and the environment.

As background he noted that after some early non-starters and negotiations, the newly established Institute chose to seek a home

State. By choosing a private university rather than a regents institution, the Harkin Institute would have more freedom from political pressure exerted by powerful special interest groups’ constraints, all seeking to gloss over or omit uncomfortable results from go-

...and a big check!



Earlham Fire Chief Shawn Boyle accepts a check for \$1,000 from Pastor Bob Waldron of the Earlham Presbyterian Church last week. The money was raised by the church’s craft group, God’s Girls. The group gets together year round to make crafts, then they sell the items at various events. (Photo by Todd Weber.)

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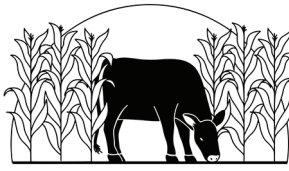


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