

# The Iowa County



**June 2024**  
**County Veterans Service**  
**Officers**

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# The Iowa County

June 2024 \* Volume 53, Number 6

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#### ISAC's Mission:

To promote effective and responsible county government  
for the people of Iowa.

#### ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation,  
information and services for and about county government  
in Iowa.

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# Affiliate Spotlight: Veterans Affairs

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This month I'm using my space to spotlight the important work of county veteran service officers and highlight some recently enacted legislation, but I wanted to start with my own story. I'll always fondly remember exchanging emails with and receiving care packages from Wright County Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Christine Oliver when I was stationed in Baghdad, Iraq. Upon my return home, we met to discuss deployment, to identify issues I might have been experiencing, and to go over veteran benefits and how to apply. We've had the opportunity to stay in touch and work together both during my time on the Wright County Board of Supervisors; and now, as Chris serves on the ISAC Legislative Policy Committee. Throughout this time, whether we're talking Wright County gossip or discussing legislation introduced, there's almost always a time when she takes a moment to check in, because I'll always be one of her veterans first. Nearly 15 years after those first emails, it was Chris making sure I got linked up with my new VSO when I moved from Polk to Dallas County. I recognize that this isn't the typical experience veterans have with their county VSO, but I wanted to share it because there are countless experiences veterans have with their VSO that are uniquely meaningful in their own way.



**Lucas Beenken**

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Imagine the veteran getting set up with physical and mental health care services for the first time, the veteran learning there is assistance for homeownership and entrepreneurship, or simply the veteran that needed a little help with an online form. It may seem small, but for the veteran receiving the benefits they have earned, it can literally be life changing. This is the importance of the county VSO, and the value they provide as the local, human face of veterans services that you don't get from mailing letters.

To get the most of this local resource and ensure veterans are receiving the assistance they need and benefits they've earned, county VSOs must receive both upfront and continual training. The PACT Act of 2022 is a great example of the need for VSOs to keep updated on changes to federal code and Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. This federal legislation expands and extends VA health care benefits for conditions related to certain toxic exposures, among many other provisions. VSOs needed to know and understand these changes, and it starts with continuing education and training. This will also be the case with future legislative and other changes to the VA system and administration of veterans benefits and services.

This year the Iowa Legislature passed and Governor Reynolds signed HF 259, a VA omnibus bill that among its provisions requires the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs to verify the qualifications of county VSOs, including federal certification. This legislation was supported by county VSOs as a way to "police their own", and ISAC was supportive as well. VSOs understand the importance of ongoing training and certification and want to ensure their counterparts statewide are prepared to best serve veterans by being sufficiently trained and certified.

HF 2663 was also signed into law this year. The bill will allocate \$3,000 to each county commission of veteran affairs specifically for national training and related expenses for county VSOs. Rather than a general fund appropriation, this legislation authorizes the use of lottery funds received by the Veterans Trust Fund. This annual appropriation will help cover the cost of training and associated travel expenses, and represents a partnership among the federal, state, and county levels working together to best serve veterans. To be frank, not every county commission of veteran affairs and board of supervisors has seen the importance of VSO training, and the county investment of property tax dollars has sometimes been lacking. Some have cut into the \$10,000 annual appropriation intended for services to veterans. This annual lottery fund appropriation will guarantee funding is available and specifically earmarked for national training.

# Affiliate Spotlight: Veterans Affairs

The Iowa Legislature and Governor Reynolds deserve credit for the steps they've taken to hold VSOs accountable AND to provide funding for the new mandates imposed. It's now up to county commissions and boards of supervisors to buy into the importance of proper, continual training. With tight local budgets no longer an excuse due to the state funding, counties must take advantage of the appropriation and provide VSOs the opportunity for self-improvement for the benefit of our veterans. As stated previously, by keeping up-to-date on new and changing programs, benefits, and services, VSOs are able to provide veterans with the information, assistance, and guidance needed to navigate what can be an overwhelming federal VA system. Veterans getting the benefits they've earned and the care they need has a tremendous impact on the individual and their family but is also valuable to the community where they live.

As we remain thankful for our veterans and all they've done and continue to do, one of the best ways to serve those that have served us is to ensure they have an understanding of, and access to, the benefits and services they've earned. This is accomplished through the county VSOs, the on-the-ground local advocates that are oftentimes the face of the VA system to many veterans. Not every VSO is going to send care packages or keep following-up a decade later like Chris, but veterans across the state will continue to receive high-quality assistance and up-to-date information if the state and counties continue to work together to invest in our veterans affairs system, including our county commissions of veteran affairs and county VSOs.



# Federal Broadband Programs

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Throughout Iowa and across the country, the Internet is now the essential tool for communication in our modern world. It is essential for access to work, access to education, access to healthcare, and access to public services. It's needed to fully engage in the economy, and it helps ensure public safety and the health of our nation. And yet, today millions of people throughout America remain unconnected.

We have been talking about the digital divide in this country for more than 20 years. Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), we finally have the resources to do something serious about it. Signed into law by President Biden, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure and competitiveness that includes the largest ever investments in high-speed Internet, rail and transit, clean energy, and water.

Under the statute, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is responsible for administering \$42.45 billion in grants with the principal focus of ensuring that every American has access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service. The primary grant is known as the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment or BEAD Program.

The BEAD Program builds high-speed Internet infrastructure where we need it. It funds planning, infrastructure deployment and adoption in all 50 states and the United States territories. Specifically, it prioritizes funding for connecting unserved locations that: have no Internet access; lack reliable broadband service; access to speeds under 25/3 Megabits per second (Mbps); and underserved locations that only have access to speeds between 25/3 and under 100/20 Mbps.

NTIA is working in partnership with the State of Iowa to plan for and deploy the historic investment in Iowa's broadband infrastructure. Last June, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced that Iowa would receive more than \$415 million to deploy or upgrade broadband networks and, "to ensure every rural and unserved resident in Iowa will soon have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet." Allocation of these funds will result in the connection of unserved and underserved locations across the state to high-speed Internet, creating economic opportunities and jobs in communities of all sizes.

Unserved and underserved locations typically have one or more of the following characteristics that may create a challenge to internet service: low population density; rural and remote locations; or difficult geography, like rocky soil or mountainous terrain. In these areas, service providers must cover, or "pass", a longer distance per end user, which can impact the return on investment (ROI) for the internet provider, and for similar reasons, make it more expensive to operate and maintain networks.

The BEAD Program will only succeed if every penny is wisely spent. This includes ensuring that



**Chris Hall**

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# Federal Broadband Programs

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subgrantees have the capacity not just to build and deploy high-speed Internet networks, but to operate those networks for years to come, delivering Internet connectivity to areas that for too long have been left behind.

Being a good steward of taxpayer dollars also means encouraging robust participation from Internet service providers (ISPs) of all types and sizes. Inclusivity is key: where larger ISPs may have the resources to deploy quickly, smaller providers often have unique expertise in serving some of the hardest-to-reach communities in America. When providers compete for BEAD funding, states and territories can more efficiently spend their allocations and make the most of this historic investment.

Underscoring their impact, the programs prioritize the use of domestic products and the creation of American jobs through the Build America Buy America (BABA) Act. The domestic content procurement preference requires that all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in covered infrastructure projects are produced in the United States. The investment in broadband infrastructure combined with the BABA requirements has already spurred many companies to expand or move manufacturing and jobs to the United States.

Finally, recognizing the benefit of closely partnering with states and local communities to understand their specific needs, NTIA employs state Federal Program Officers (FPOs), who support the implementation of the BEAD and Digital Equity programs in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and the territories. FPOs serve as liaisons between NTIA, states, territories, Tribes, and awardees. They also work to encourage community engagement and serve as subject matter experts and points of contact between local stakeholders and NTIA.

In 2023, Iowa used planning funds to host 55 town halls. These meetings gathered key public input on the connections, skills, devices, and affordability factors essential to creating Internet for All. The state held all but one of the town halls at a community library or community college campus.

There are key opportunities for local government and elected officials to inform the program and ensure connectivity reaches every Iowan. For more information, please visit [www.InternetforAll.gov](https://www.InternetforAll.gov) or contact the Federal Program Officer for Iowa, Chris Hall, at [chall@ntia.gov](mailto:chall@ntia.gov).

# Men: Take Care of Your Health

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When it comes to health care, men tend to endure their symptoms and pain. In a national survey, 72% of the male participants said they would rather do household chores, like cleaning the bathroom or mowing the lawn, than go to the doctor.

**Attention men:** June is Men's Health Awareness Month and a good time to prioritize your health. Encourage the men in your life to address some of these common health concerns identified by MercyOne:

## **Skipping the doctor**

This is a big one. Primary care providers are the cornerstone of your medical team. Your primary care provider (PCP) is more than someone you should visit for an annual physical. This provider is your trusted health care teammate and usually your first step in your circle of care. The moral of the story – skipping preventive care and ignoring symptoms is dangerous and can put your health and well-being at risk.

"It's super important to have your home base for both preventive and acute illnesses," said David Ens, MD, at MercyOne South Sioux City Family Medicine. "When I've seen you several times I don't need to look back at your chart because I know you. I know you, your health needs, your kids, your grandkids, etc. I know the whole of your well-being."



**Dr. David Ens, MD**  
MercyOne South Sioux City  
Family Medicine  
[www.mercyone.org](http://www.mercyone.org)

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In the same survey mentioned above, 65% of the male participants said they wait as long as possible before they see a doctor. Men will "tough it out" and wait until their symptoms are at the breaking point before seeking care. "There are some illnesses and diseases that if you come in too late or when you finally are experiencing symptoms, the treatment becomes very difficult," Dr. Ens said. "A good example is colon cancer. Early colon cancer has few symptoms, so if you wait until you have noticeable bleeding, then it might require more intensive treatment like surgery or chemotherapy." Some conditions present differently - like when a heart attack feels more like indigestion or acid reflux.

## **Avoiding conversations around erectile dysfunction**

One area some men specifically tend to ignore and not discuss is erectile dysfunction (ED). However, ED can be your body's way of alerting you that something is wrong.

"The arteries that go to the penis are the same size as the arteries that wrap around the heart," Dr. Ens said. "If there is plaque that is preventing blood flow causing ED there's a pretty good chance you have plaque around your heart too."

A few other common causes that may cause ED include:

- Diabetes
- Excessive alcohol use
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Low testosterone
- Obesity
- Sleep disorders



# Men: Take Care of Your Health

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“ED is one condition that hits home with men,” Dr. Enszt said. “It can really open up the door to look into their health further and find other issues.”

## **Ignoring risk of diabetes**

Diabetes affects nearly 37.3 million people in the United States, and that number is on the rise. It’s never too late to make small lifestyle changes that could help prevent or manage diabetes.

The best time to address type 2 diabetes is before it has developed. Get a blood glucose screening to know if you are at risk, particularly if you lead a sedentary lifestyle, are overweight, or have a family history of diabetes. Watch the size of your food portions to lose weight or to maintain a healthy weight. A high-fiber diet can help prevent type 2 diabetes. Eat whole grains instead of refined grains. Get moving, and aim to be physically active at least 30 minutes a day. Physical activity lowers blood sugar and boosts your sensitivity to insulin. This helps to keep your blood sugar within normal range.

Symptoms of diabetes include:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Very thirsty and hungry
- Urinate often, especially at night
- Blurry vision
- Numb or tingling hands or feet
- Dry skin

## **Excessive drinking**

The CDC reports men are two times more likely to binge drink than women. You already know alcohol has short-term effects on decision-making, balance, vision, and more. The long-term effects of excessive drinking include:

- Liver disease
- Heart disease
- Pancreatitis
- Dementia
- Alzheimer’s disease

Alcohol also plays heavily into men’s mental and behavioral health. Men are three times as likely to die by suicide and are more likely to have been drinking prior to suicide. Too often, alcohol is used as a bandage to feel better when really it can make things worse.

## **Mental health**

Men don’t always come out and say specifically that they are depressed. Instead, they bring up other issues that end up being symptoms of depression.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- Anxiety
- Feelings of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Lack of energy
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities and hobbies
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia or oversleeping)
- Trouble concentrating, making decisions and remembering things

*\*This article focuses on men’s health, but many of these issues also affect everyone. Please be diligent in seeking care when you have symptoms as discussed in this informative article.*

# 2024 ISAC Annual Conference Educational Seminars Preview

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## 2024 ISAC Annual Conference Educational Seminars Wednesday, August 21

### Meeting Room 307-310

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm – County Governance Unveiled: Navigating Parliamentary Procedures and Open Records

2:30 pm - 4:30 pm – The Ethics and Effective Use of AI

### Meeting Room 312-314

#### Retirement Considerations for County Employees Track

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm – Wellmark Retiree Solutions

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm – Managing the Taxes on your Retirement Income

3:30 pm – 4:30 pm – Ready, Set, Retire! with IPERS

### Meeting Room 302-304

#### Water in Iowa Track

12:00 pm – 4:30 pm

*\*The full conference and affiliate agendas will be available at [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org). Don't miss the party!*

# April Board Meeting Minutes Summary

## ISAC Board of Directors Meeting Summary - April 3, 2024

President Barry Anderson called the meeting to order and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board unanimously approved ISAC engaging the Ahlers and Cooney law firm to prepare a friend of the court brief in the case of *Smith v. Des Moines Area Community College*.

Stephen Acquario, Executive Director from the New York State Association of Counties, and Mark O'Connell, CEO from the Wisconsin Counties Association, gave presentations to the Board regarding how their associations operate. The Board asked questions of the guests.

Bill Peterson facilitated a discussion with Stephen and Mark on what some of the key qualities necessary to successfully lead and manage an association.

Each ISAC team discussed with the Board their priorities regarding the next executive director.

Final questions and future plans were discussed with the group prior to adjournment.

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# 2024 Calendar

## June 2024

- 11-13 ICRA Summer School  
(Okoboji, Iowa)
- 18-21 ITAG Conference  
(West Des Moines Sheraton)
- 18-20 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)
- 26-28 ISACA Summer Conference  
(Embassy Suites Des Moines Downtown)

## July 2024

- 12-15 NACo Annual Conference and Exposition  
(Hillsborough County/Tampa, Florida)
- 17 ISAC Scholarship Golf Fundraiser  
(Toad Valley Golf Course, Pleasant Hill)

## August 2024

- 21-23 ISAC Annual Conference  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice  
Credit Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

## September 2024

- 17-20 ISSDA Fall Jail School  
(Holiday Inn Des Moines Airport)
- 24 Leadership Seminar  
(West Des Moines Marriott)

## October 2024

- 2-4 ISAC Board of Directors Retreat  
(Clay County)
- 6-9 Assessors Fall School  
(Holiday Inn Des Moines Airport)

## November 2024

- 13 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)

## December 2024

- 3-6 ISSDA Winter School  
(Holiday Inn Des Moines Airport)
- 4-6 78th Annual Iowa County Engineers Conference  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit  
Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

If you have any questions about the meetings listed above or would like to add an affiliate meeting to the ISAC calendar, please contact Kelsey Sebern at [ksebern@iowacounties.org](mailto:ksebern@iowacounties.org).

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representing ICAP and IMWCA  
Assured Partners

#### Elite Preferred Vendors

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Murphy Tractor and Equipment Co.  
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#### Endorsed Platinum Preferred Vendor

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(IPAIT)

#### Platinum Preferred Vendors

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Northland Securities, Inc.  
Schneider Geospatial  
Tyler Technologies

#### Gold Preferred Vendor

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#### Silver Preferred Vendors

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Email Luke ([lukea@pdaleadership.com](mailto:lukea@pdaleadership.com)) to secure your scholarship, enroll your team, and celebrate with us. Let's make leaders better, together, in 2024 and beyond.







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Rebecca Bissell  
Auditor, Adams County

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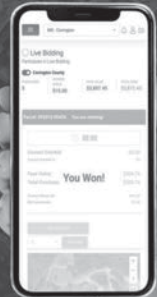
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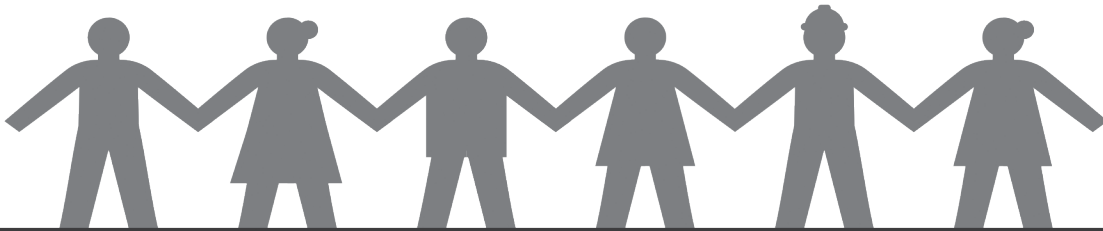


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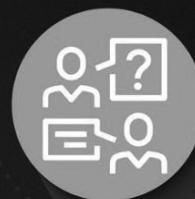
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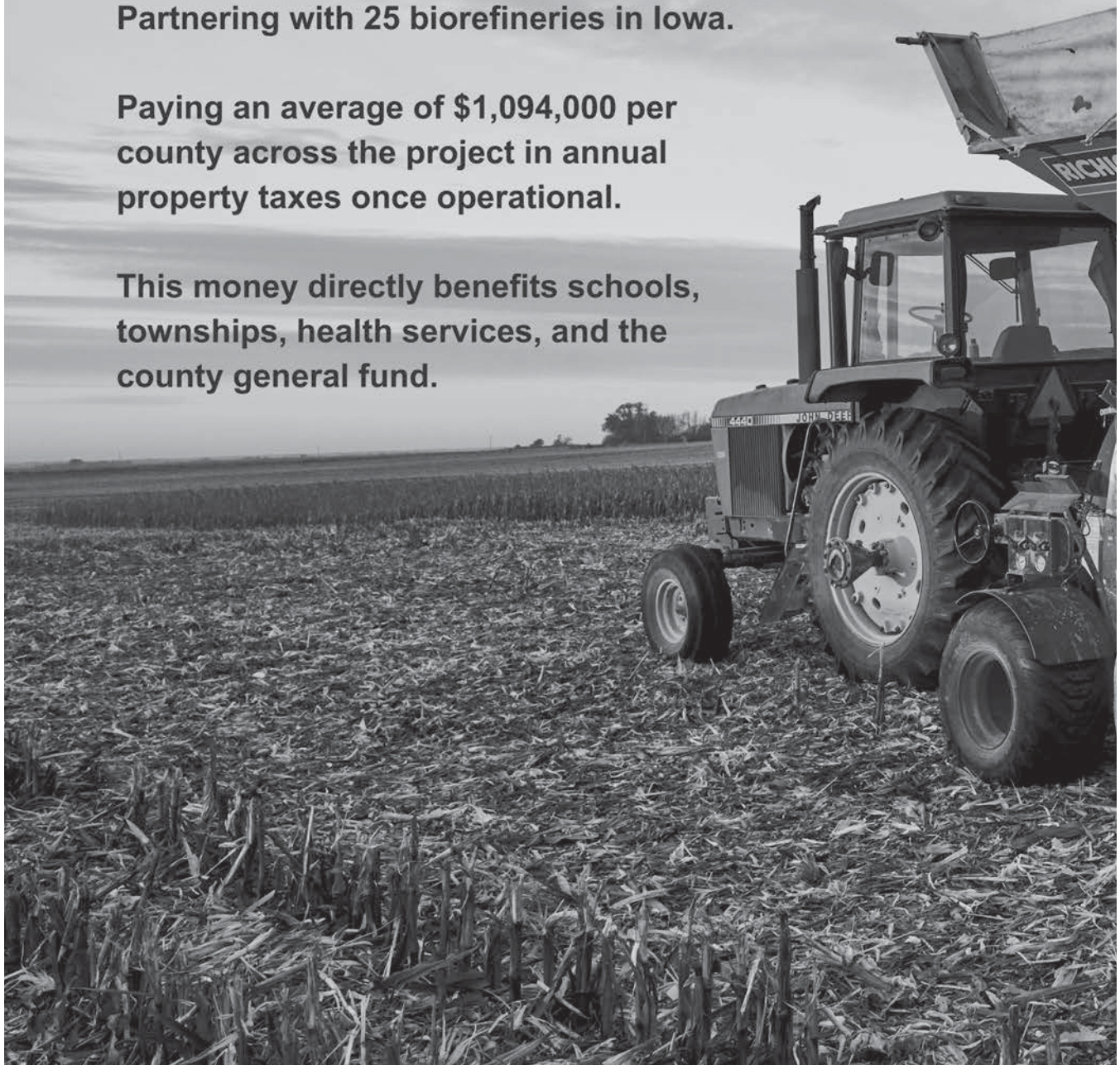
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# ISAC GROUP BENEFITS PROGRAM

PARTNERING WITH COUNTIES ACROSS IOWA



## Health Program

- Early release of renewal rates
- Experience and wellness discounts
- Multiple networks and plan designs
- 28 member counties



## Worksite & Ancillary Program

- Group accident and critical illness plans
- Accident includes AD&D and wellness
- Voluntary Life and Voluntary AD&D
- Group disability products



## Dental Program

- Comprehensive plan portfolio
- Voluntary and contributory pricing
- Broad network of providers
- 29 member counties



## Complimentary ISAC Benefits

- Wellness program with Accident plan
- Employee Assistance Program
- COBRA administration
- Consolidated Billing



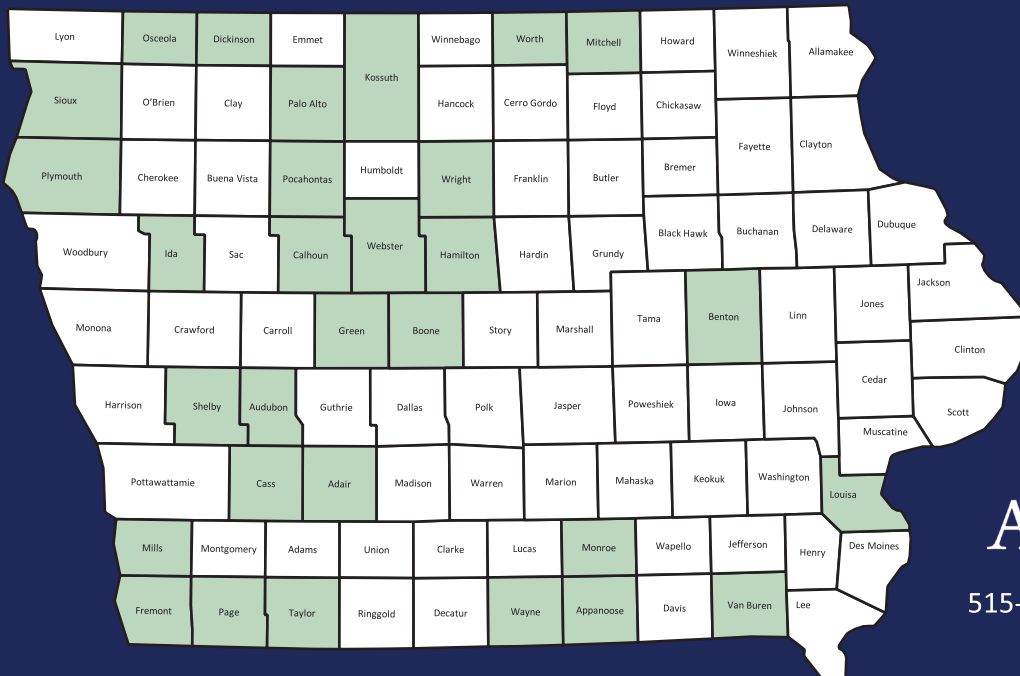
## Vision Program

- Multiple carriers and plan options
- Exclusive fully insured county pricing
- Robust provider networks
- 23 member counties



## AssuredPartners

- Employee benefit consulting
- Dedicated county service team
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