

*Western Iowa Advantage is a collaborative group of economic development officials in Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Ida, and Sac Counties.*

## WIAD Partner Region XII COG Small Business Webinar Series Available Online

Early in 2021, Region XII COG partnered with the Small Business Development Center and developed a webinar series to assist regional small businesses to assist with recovery and look towards future growth and opportunities as we move past the COVID19 Pandemic. The webinar series was made possible through special CARES ACT funding provided to Region XII Council of Governments from the Economic Development Administration. Each of the 9 webinars are now available for viewing [HERE](#).



## Greene County Development Corporation Starts Retail Revisited Project

The COVID Pandemic hurt a large number of retailers within the last year and those in Greene County were not immune from the pandemic's affects. Due to restrictions and protocols created by the pandemic, foot traffic to a large number of the businesses within the county was limited. The limited foot traffic has created a need for a larger presence on social media and although a large number of the local businesses want to increase their social media presence, lack of staff and/or knowledge has created a barrier. Greene County Development Corporation wanted to bridge this gap and Retail Revisited was created. Retail Revisited is a project which provides high school interns to local businesses to help with expanding the business' social media presence and to teach them how to be more effective online. To add another aspect of the project, Greene County Development Corporation is providing online webinars to answer any questions that businesses may have. After the webinar is complete, it is put into a social media library which is available on YouTube to all Greene County businesses.

On May 11, the first meet-and-greet of the program was held at Thomas Jefferson Gardens in Jefferson. This meeting introduced the first wave of interns to their businesses. After the meeting, interns went to their businesses to better understand how the business operates. Beginning May 3, the interns will meet with their businesses twice a week. Interns are bound by a contract and have a set of evaluative criteria to follow. A grant was utilized to purchase new iPads and other necessary equipment. A partnership with the Career Academy at the new high school allows for the teachers to assist the interns and provide additional training as necessary.

This phase will last three months for six retailers and three interns. Greene County Development Corporation intends to add more sessions and expand the type of businesses it supports. For more information about the Retail Revisited Project, contact Ken Paxton, Executive Director, Greene County Development Corporation at ken@greencountyiowa.com or 319-541-4146.



### SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM KICKS OFF

Greene County High School students, Jefferson business owners, Greene County Development Corporation & Jefferson Matters: A Main Street & Chamber Community have teamed up to create this unique social marketing and learning program.

## The T-Bone Trail - Western Iowa

A modern day expedition into Western Iowa. It will be one of the beefiest missions of the year and The Iowa Gallivant is going to take it on! The T-Bone Trail Western Iowa is on the horizon and some of Iowa's greatest communities will be showcased during the May-August adventure! The Iowa Gallivant will be highlighting some of the famous restaurants, landmarks, and locals that make the region shine which includes some of the best cattle producers in the world on his blog.

In 1999, JayJay Goodvin, The Iowa Gallivant took off on an 11 year culinary crusade that led him to Arizona, Montana, Cape Cod, the Florida Keys, the Black Hills of South Dakota, Austin, Texas, Central Illinois, and back to Iowa City. The Iowa Gallivant's love of traveling, food, and family drive his blog and sees Iowa as an amazing state corner to corner and everything else between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. There's something brewing here in Cornbelt, USA and you should come and see it for yourself!

Check out Jay's time in Audubon County! Follow along with The Iowa Gallivant on the trail by visiting the trip's Facebook Page [HERE](#) or by visiting his blog [HERE](#).



---

## WESTERN IOWA ENERGY IS A LEADER IN THE BIODIESEL INDUSTRY

*Ellen Williams, Golden Shovel Agency, Copywriter*

Western Iowa Energy (WIE) in Sac County is a major driver of the rapidly growing biodiesel industry as a BQ9000 Accredited Producer capable of generating 45 million gallons annually. Their accreditation attests they have passed a rigorous review and inspection of their quality control processes by an independent auditor.

Biodiesel is a cleaner-burning fuel that is nearly carbon-neutral; meaning it contributes almost zero emissions towards global warming. It is renewable, environmentally friendly, sulfur-free, and displaces imported petroleum.



"We are helping many states hit their carbon reduction goals by reducing the carbon intensity of emissions," said Bradley Wilson, WIE President/General Manager. Mr. Wilson is also Chairman of the Iowa Biodiesel Board, Secretary of the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association, and sits on the California Advanced Biofuels Alliance board.

Additionally, Iowa legislators are considering a much needed biofuel standard that would help keep Iowa at the forefront of both carbon reduction goals and economic development by taking into account the other states that have passed legislation on biofuel policy.

WIE also owns and operates Agron Bioenergy in Watsonville, CA. "The facility can take in biodiesel by rail from our production facility in Iowa, then load out to trucks in the California market gaining valuable credits from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) low carbon fuel standard program," said Wilson.

## Western Iowa Energy is a Leader in the Biodiesel Industry Continued from Page 2

WIE has the ability to turn multiple feedstocks into biodiesel due to their specialized pre-treatment facility. “Being flexible by design, we can use a wide array of Iowa feedstocks above and beyond soybean oil to make our biodiesel from, such as recycled cooking oil from restaurants and animal fats from the meatpacking industries, as well as being capable of using many other waste oils and fats,” said Wilson.

Wilson credits this flexibility and knowledgeable leadership to WIE’s fifteen-plus year success. “We have a Board of Directors who know the industry inside and out — most of them helped create the industry.”

The biodiesel industry in Iowa saw success in 2020 even amidst the market challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Plants managed to bump up production to 351 million gallons despite only nine of Iowa’s 11 biodiesel plants being in operation. In fact, 2020 proved to be the second highest year of biodiesel production in Iowa history — just behind the 365 million gallons produced in 2018.

WIE is just beginning a project to quadruple its rail spur size on the Canadian National Railway that will allow railcars of feedstock to be unloaded and utilized on site. “We received a \$500,000 no-interest loan grant through the IDOT,” said Wilson. “We needed more space for many reasons, but two of the biggest reasons were so we could receive feedstock in by rail instead of just by truck, and also to store railcars in slow times. Now we have them scattered across the country and it takes many days or weeks for them to make it back to us when the demand picks back up.”

“Sac County is a great rural Iowa county in regards to business growth, good schools, numerous recreational facilities, and parks and trails,” said Wilson. “Operating a business in a progressive small rural county in Iowa has been great. We have the infrastructure that is needed and required to compete with the large-industry-oriented municipalities and counties throughout the world.”

WIE employs 31 in Wall Lake, IA and is conscientious about giving back to the community. Early during the pandemic in March 2020, WIE sent glycerin to the state of Iowa to be used by Iowa Prison Industries for the production of hand sanitizer during the national shortage. The finished product was shipped free of charge by the state of Iowa for priority use.



In 2019, WIE organized a food drive for local pantries and established a Monarch Fueling Station spanning roughly four acres at its plant near Wall Lake. Native grasses and milkweed were planted since monarch butterflies can only lay their eggs on milkweed.

“Biodiesel production is all about turning the seemingly useless into something useful,” said Kevin Bieret, Operations Manager of WIE. “We transform agriculture coproducts into green fuel. We see this Monarch Fueling Project as a new way to do that again, by turning something we have to mow into habitat to help fuel monarch butterflies. We are excited to take the next step toward providing much-needed habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.”

“We are helping to keep the butterflies off of the endangered list,” said Wilson, “thus helping to keep restrictions low on our farmer owners of Western Iowa Energy — plus it is just the right thing to do.”

Biodiesel makes sense economically and environmentally for the state of Iowa, as well as the nation, and WIE is equipped to lead the way.

Western Iowa, with its committed workforce, strong sense of community, and quality of life, should be high on the list for companies looking to grow and improve. Contact Western Iowa Advantage to learn more about the region, workforce, and available sites. Follow them on Facebook and LinkedIn.

*images courtesy Iowa Biodiesel Board*



