

Virtual Eco Conference Connects Iowans to Greener Lifestyle

Written by Amanda Heitz

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Families across Iowa will be getting together — virtually — once a month from January through June for an [Eco Family Virtual Conference](#) from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. It's an opportunity for families to improve the environment, reduce their carbon footprint and create community as they participate in a do-as-you-learn format.

The online conference has been designed with families in mind so everyone can participate and benefit, even families with young children. Conference materials connect families and encourage them to make conscious decisions about the environment.

Once enrolled in the conference, families will have access to educational videos, software to create personal avatar videos, family activities and other resources to explore for one month before the session. On the first Thursday of each month, January through June, participants will share during the 90-minute session what they have learned and experienced. As a group they will have the opportunity to create actions plans for their family and community. All sessions begin at 6:30 p.m.

“Connecting to people where they are is one of the things ISU Extension and Outreach does best. We want to make this available to people in multiple places, rather than limit the learning experiences to a geographic location,” said Kristi Cooper, an ISU Extension family life specialist and one of the conference organizers.

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“With the flipped classroom families can apply what they learn, share what they did and get ideas for ongoing action plans as they connect with others of similar interests. Also, this is a way for people to create community close to where they live if they choose,” Cooper said.

2014 Virtual Conference Sessions

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Jan. 2 – Energy (materials available Dec. 1, 2013)

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Feb. 6 – The New Economy (materials available Jan. 3)

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March 6 – Food & Genetic Engineering (materials available Feb. 7)

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April 3 – Air Quality (materials available March 7)

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May 1 – We are Nature (materials available April 4)

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June 5 – Water (materials available May 2)

To participate in the conference, families need a computer with high-speed Internet access, speakers or headphones and a microphone.

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Registration is available online at <http://bit.ly/eco2014> . The registration fee for the six-session virtual conference is \$55 before Nov. 30 and \$70 after that date. Registration also can be made by the session; fee per session prior through Nov. 30 is \$10 and \$15 per session after that date. Once registered, participants will receive log-in directions for accessing the virtual classroom for all conference sessions.

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