



Cassidy Monaco, Leanne Corwin, Dalonie Jordan, Mindy Dolan and Barb Grant work with Operation Threshold in Waterloo. Their Family Development and Self Sufficiency (FaDSS) program connects Black Hawk County families in need with support and assistance from local organizations. They help moms and dads find housing, food, energy assistance, transportation, counseling and parent education.

UNI LEADS ON LOWERING STUDENT DEBT

The University of Northern Iowa is leading the nation in their work to reduce student debt. The percentage of students with debt has declined by 10 percent since 2009, when UNI began its [Live Like a Student](#) initiative. President Mark Nook recently [wrote about it](#) for the American Council on Education. Read what he had to say about the success of Live Like at Student at www.higheredtoday.org.

FOCUSING ON WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

The first week of session is steeped in tradition. Leaders from the three branches of state government share their vision for a better Iowa. There are lots of good ideas, but ultimately, we must focus on what matters most in Iowans' everyday lives and make wise use of your hard-earned tax dollars.

Iowans want us to work together, to lead with civility and to find real solutions to real problems.

I want to ensure all Iowans have the chance to get ahead. No matter where you live, you should have access to:

- Better jobs
- Great schools
- Affordable health care
- Opportunities for fun, learning and recreation

Over the last year, you've shown us how much you are paying attention to what we say and do at the Statehouse. Legislators know you expect us to keep our promises and reflect your values.

That means showing respect for older Iowans and protecting children and those living with disabilities by providing the critical services they need, including Medicaid, mental health care and safe homes.

When we say education is a top priority, keeping our promises means responsibly investing in our students and schools, and showing appreciation for teachers and other professionals who do so much to prepare our kids for their future.

Keeping our promises means making sure all Iowans have safe drinking water, and bringing together everybody who wants to take part in discussions about the future of our water, environment and economy.

Keeping our promises means improving life for Iowans in every community so that Iowa truly can be the very best state to live, work and raise a family.

A BOOST FOR IOWANS, ESPECIALLY IN SMALL TOWNS & RURAL AREAS

Iowa's economic momentum has slowed in recent years.

I am ready to help turn things around with smart investments that will boost family incomes and improve Iowa communities. In particular, we must do more to revitalize our small towns and rural areas.

We can do it by:

- Investing in community colleges, apprenticeships and job-training that help Iowans get ahead
- Putting local employees and businesses first
- Committing resources to better roads, water and local projects
- Making sure families have affordable housing and safe neighborhoods

We have lots of opportunities with homegrown energy – solar, wind and biofuels. Solar and wind already support more than 7,000 Iowa jobs and nearly 300 Iowa businesses. Ethanol and biodiesel also provide thousands more jobs and good incomes for Iowa farmers.

We can create even more opportunities in every corner of the state by:

- Giving Iowa businesses seeking to sell products and services to the state the chance to match competing out-of-state bids.
- Installing high-speed internet throughout the state so that Iowans with ideas and ambition have the tools they need to succeed.
- Expanding incentives to build safe, affordable housing for working families where it is most needed.
- Putting more resources into Main Street companies that are committed to their communities.

IOWA COURTS SUCCEED WITH POSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Iowa's outstanding court system continues to help Iowans through innovative programs.

The Judicial Branch has several "problem-solving courts" that are fine tuned to address criminal behavior related to substance abuse and mental health concerns, including 20 adult drug courts, four mental health courts and one veterans' court.

In just one year, the mental health court in Scott County had 19 successful participants, who are getting the health care they need to stay out of trouble and become better citizens.

Iowa's juvenile courts serve kids and their families. Young people who have committed crimes are held accountable and are re-directed in ways that allow them to reach their full potential.

In his Condition of the Judiciary presentation, Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady highlighted "Too Good to Lose," a one-of-a-kind program devoted to the challenges of teen girls. These girls have been accused of crimes and have used drugs, but they are also victims – of sexual assault, domestic violence or human trafficking.

"Too Good to Lose" helps them stay drug free and safe, get an education and give back to their community. Part of their success involves developing positive bonds with trustworthy adults, including the judge overseeing the program, the juvenile court supervisory officer and local women who offer their support.

Chief Justice Cady hopes to expand "Too Good to Lose" throughout the state and that it will become a model for the rest of the country.

The innovative approach of specialty courts and programs gives a second chance to Iowans who end up in our criminal justice system and improves public safety for all Iowans.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

High school student needed for State Board of Education

Each year, one Iowa student is appointed to serve on the [State Board of Education](#). The State Board meets at least seven times per year, usually in Des Moines.

Applicants must:

- Be full-time tenth- or eleventh-grade students at a public high school.
- Have a GPA of at least 3.0 (4.0 scale) or 3.75 (5.0 scale).
- Have attended their current high school the past two semesters.
- Participate in extracurricular and community activities, and show an interest in serving on the board.

Applications will be accepted through February 1 for the term that runs from May 1, 2018, through April 30, 2019. Learn more at www.educateiowa.gov/iowa-state-board-education#Student_Member_Application.

DCI accepting applications for summer internships

Iowa's Division of Criminal Investigation provides professional support to federal, state and local law enforcement and service to the citizens of Iowa. An intern with DCI will experience the variety of services and investigative resources the division provides on a daily basis.

Contact information

State Senator Jeff Danielson serves Hudson, Cedar Falls and Waterloo. He can be reached at 319-231-7192. E-mail him at jeffdanielson@gmail.com.

Senator Danielson is ranking member on the Education Budget. He also serves on the Appropriations, Education, State Government and Transportation committees.

For further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/danielson and www.jeffdanielson.org.

The internship program is open to current college students who are at least 19 years old, U.S. citizens, in good standing with their college/university, have a valid driver's license, and successfully pass a thorough background check. Summer interns will work about 20 hours per week, Monday through Thursday, from June 1 through August 15. The application deadline is March 1.

Learn more about DCI internships at www.dps.state.ia.us/DCI/DCIInternships.shtml. Those interested in applying should contact the Internship coordinator at decamp@dps.state.ia.us.

History award nominations are open

The State Historical Society of Iowa is accepting nominations for its [Excellence in Iowa History Awards](#). The program recognizes individuals, organizations and communities that make contributions to Iowa history, as well as outstanding publications, local history initiatives and significant, long-term achievements. Nominations are due February 5. Complete details are available at www.iowaculture.gov/history.

Iowa Scholarship for the Arts

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs is accepting applications through March 1 for its [Iowa Scholarship for the Arts](#). The scholarship provides \$1,500 toward tuition for an outstanding Iowa high school senior who plans to attend an Iowa college, major in fine arts and pursue a career in the arts. Find complete details at www.iowaculture.gov/arts/opportunities.