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Chaisson-Cárdenas to Lead Iowa 4-H Program

AMES, Iowa -- John-Paul Chaisson-Cárdenas has been hired as the new Iowa 4-H Youth Development program leader for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. He begins his position July 21.

Chaisson-Cárdenas has more than 15 years of experience leading programs and organizations in the anti-poverty, child welfare and public education arenas and more than 20 years of experience in community development. He has a strong background in working with underrepresented populations; in public policy at the local, state and national levels; and research and evaluation. He also has partnered with 4-H programs in West Liberty and Johnson County. Most recently he served as executive director of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission.

Chaisson-Cárdenas has a Master of Social Work from the University of Iowa and bachelor's degrees in sociology from Saint Mary University in Leavenworth, Kansas, and in international relations and multiculturalism from Saint Mary of the Plains College in Dodge City, Kansas. He has completed course work at the University of Iowa for his interdisciplinary Ph.D. in cross-cultural competence education and training.

Several initiatives are underway to strengthen core 4-H programs, such as 4-H animal science, ag literacy and youth leadership, said Cathann Kress, vice president for ISU Extension and Outreach. The Iowa 4-H Youth Development program recently completed an effective strategic planning process to refocus on key priorities in science, technology, engineering and math – often referred to as STEM – as well as healthy living, communication and the arts, and citizenship. Concurrently, National 4-H is preparing to launch a national initiative to ensure 4-H grows in the future by increasing access with urban and multicultural audiences, and new delivery models and resources.

“John-Paul will add value to the Iowa 4-H program by building on what we already do so well, empowering youth to reach their full potential through youth and adult partnerships and research-based experiences,” Kress said. “With his leadership, the ISU Extension and Outreach 4-H Youth Development program will work to increase the capacity of our youth, volunteers, community partners, faculty and staff to build programs that are welcoming and inclusive of all Iowa youth.”

“My entire career has involved working with young people – from inner-city Chicago to small rural communities in Iowa and Washington state. I look forward to creating opportunities for more Iowa youth to develop life skills, make friends and have fun through 4-H,” Chaisson-Cárdenas said.

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