

STUDENTS LIVING **CARDINAL, GOLD AND GREEN**

To find community at Iowa State University, students do not need to look far. More than 800 student organizations provide a space to build community in every aspect of a student's life, whether it be based on interests, identities, goals or visions for the future.

These organizations help members build connections with one another and foster a stronger sense of belonging on campus and within communities beyond Iowa State.



Photo Courtesy of ISU Student Engagement

When considering a sustainable future, student organizations play a vital role, particularly related to the aspect of social sustainability. As noted on the [Live Green website](#), social sustainability includes, "embracing the richness of our world (both globally and locally), connecting to our communities and giving back through volunteerism."

The opportunity for involvement in these organizations offers students a unique connection to finding and building a community that is unique and relevant to them. These connections often extend past club meeting hours

and beyond graduation — ensuring world citizens with an understanding and awareness of the vital role of community toward a collectively connected and resilient future.

This month's Students Living Cardinal, Gold and Green highlights the impressive work of five organizations committed to building community on campus and beyond: Alliance for Disability Awareness, HDFS Happiness Club, International Student Council, Pay It Forward and The Pride Alliance.

Alliance for Disability Awareness
[The Alliance for Disability Awareness](#) (ADA) cultivates a space for underrepresented students to find community.

"Disabled people attend higher education at a lower rate than abled people, so it can be difficult to meet other people with whom we can identify," Cat Phelps, a sophomore history student and president of the ADA, stated. "We want to make up for that feeling of invisibility by giving disabled students a place to relax, joke around and feel supported by their peers."

ADA club meetings include extensive time to share experiences. "We are happy to listen to anyone who wants to share about their lives, whether they're talking about a new mobility aid, a challenging doctor visit or a hobby that enriches their life," Phelps noted.

Disabled students and allies are encouraged to share hardships

and successes, contributing to the open environment that members value. "We want to be consistent in giving people a place to share their experiences and learn from others," Phelps commented.



Image Courtesy of Alliance for Disability Awareness

Phelps has been committed to building campus partnerships for ADA since coming to Iowa State, and noted that she believes in, "the importance of community built and managed by disabled people, for disabled people."

She is dedicated to ensuring a strong foundation for the ADA community for generations of Cyclones and hopes to cultivate, "an understanding based on a variety of shared life experiences and priorities."



Photo Courtesy of Alliance for Disability Awareness

The ADA meets biweekly on Tuesdays at 5 p.m. in 1158 Hixon Lied Academic Success Center. During the upcoming Nov. 4 meeting, the ADA will provide coloring pages and opportunities to connect with other students.

For more information or to join the Alliance for Disability Awareness, visit their [Student Organizations Database webpage](#) on the Iowa State University Student Engagement website, or connect to their [Instagram](#) (@iowastateada).



Photo Courtesy of Alliance for Disability Awareness

HDFS Happiness Club

Positive connection is a crucial tool in establishing an effective community. The [Human Development and Family Studies \(HDFS\) Happiness Club](#) strives to accomplish just that.

Kendra Oostenink, the public relations officer for the club, said that the club, “creates a supportive space for all students and encourages them to positively interact with others in the club, on campus, and in the community.”

The club’s mission is to empower students with the skills to promote happiness and satisfaction in their lives. The club works toward this goal by offering social support and opportunities for members to expand upon pro-social skills.



Image Courtesy of HDFS Happiness Club

Oostenink commented that, “the Happiness Club is proud to be a part of students’ journeys toward positive mental health as well as the opportunity to be part of a community centered on unrelenting positivity.”

At meetings, club members participate in a variety of activities designed to target mental health, campus resources and general happiness. Past activities have included writing gratitude notes and creating self-care calendars and stress-relieving tools. Guest speakers educate members on important mental health topics and share resources available to Iowa State students.

“Through these initiatives,” Oostenink emphasized, “members gain tools for managing stress, improving mindfulness,

cultivating gratitude and just general happiness.”



Photo Courtesy of HDFS Happiness Club

Outside of club meetings, the HDFS Happiness Club participates in campus events to share their mission and spread happiness. During the fall semester, the club attended the ISU 4U Promise College Night and Collegiate 4H’s Trunk or Treat event.

Partnerships with other campus groups, including the HDFS department, allow the organization to connect students with faculty and advisors, as well as with the greater Iowa State University community.

The HDFS Happiness Club’s work on campus contributes to an overall positive community. Oostenink stated, “I am grateful for the experience I have had, as well as the community that the club has created.”

Oostenink’s own connection to community has also expanded because of her involvement in HDFS Happiness Club. “I now have the tools to create meaningful connections with

others, as well as the resources to create social events for others,” she noted.

The Happiness Club meets once a month in Ross Hall 0120, 5:30-6:30 p.m. The November meeting, Games and Gratitude, will be on Nov. 10. The final meeting of the fall semester is the Chill Out Social on Dec. 1.



Photo Courtesy of HDFS Happiness Club

For more information or to join the HDFS Happiness Club, visit their [Student Organizations Database webpage](#) on the Iowa State University Student Engagement website, or connect to their [Instagram](#) (@hdfs_happiness_club).

International Student Council
The [International Student Council](#) (ISC) strives to deliver opportunities for international students to share their culture and feel at home.

Iowa State University has almost 3,000 international students enrolled for the Fall 2025 semester, making up 9% of the total student body. These students come from 110 countries

and are often attending school a world away from where “home” is to them. ISC creates a place for students to share pieces of home and learn about other international students’ cultures.



Image Courtesy of International Student Council

Adwika Chauhan, a sophomore studying actuarial science, serves as vice-president. “Community connection is at the heart of what we do,” Chauhan noted.

With a goal of creating inclusive spaces for international students to connect with one another, the International Student Council offers unique opportunities for engaging and empowering connections. “Members gain leadership experience, cultural awareness and event-planning skills,” Chauhan emphasized, “They also build friendships across diverse backgrounds.”

In addition to supporting social sustainability, ISC also is committed to economic sustainability through providing support through scholarships and their Rest Assured Initiative, which offers high-quality beds to

students in need — collectively enabling enhanced focus on their studies. The council completed their fifth annual Rest Assured Initiative fundraiser in February , partially through a collaboration with Habitat for Humanity. Chauhan noted that the, “fundraiser and scholarship program provide tangible support to international students.”



Photo Courtesy of International Student Council

Personally, Chauhan has experienced many benefits from her International Student Council involvement. “Being part of ISC has helped me connect with students from all over the world and appreciate the diversity within ISU,” she stated, adding that she has, “become more involved and passionate about creating spaces where everyone feels welcome.”

The council organizes several major annual events throughout the year. The International Culture Fair will be on Nov. 9 in the Memorial Union Great Hall, 5-9 p.m., with the goal of celebrating the diversity that exists at Iowa State University.

ISC also hosts an annual World Soccer Tournament, this year's tournament will take place Nov. 1-2 at Lied Recreation Center. Although the sign-up deadline has already passed, interested students are invited to spectate and cheer for their favorite team.



Photo Courtesy of International Student Council

For more information or to join the International Student Council, visit their [Student Organization Database webpage](#) on the Iowa State University Student Engagement website, their [personal website \(isc.stuorg.iastate.edu\)](#) or connect to their [Instagram](#) (@isc_isu).

Pay It Forward

Some student organizations dedicate their time to giving back to communities locally, nationally and internationally. [Pay It Forward](#) empowers students to explore service leadership through participation in volunteer opportunities directly connected to the Ames community.

Daniel Springman, a senior in software engineering, serves as the club's president. "We believe that college students truly CAN make a difference," Springman said of the club's mission. Pay It Forward hosts

two to four volunteer events each month. The club works with local organizations to provide a plentiful variety of volunteer opportunities for students.



Image Courtesy of Pay It Forward

In the past, Pay It Forward has coordinated volunteer events with Ames community organizations including Youth and Shelter Services, the Center for Creative Justice, The Octagon Center for the Arts, Reiman Gardens and Overflow Thrift Store.

"I think one of the greatest benefits our members gain is learning about places in the community that can thrive with volunteers," Springman emphasized.

Pay It Forward connects students with organizations in Ames that need volunteers in order to effectively operate. Often times that relationship continues. After connecting to an organization through Pay It Forward, many members continue volunteering with them — excited to keep dedicating time and effort toward an ongoing impact.

In addition to the social sustainability aspect of many student organizations, many of Pay It Forward's projects also directly target environmental sustainability and result in positive environmental impacts. Past projects include trash pick-ups, raptor conservation and community gardening — contributing to a stronger and healthier environment.



Photo Courtesy of Pay It Forward

For Springman, Pay It Forward delivers a pathway to an ever-expanding community. "I was born and raised just north of Chicago and never knew what Ames was until I enrolled in school at ISU," Springman stated. "Joining Pay It Forward, I realized there was so much more to Ames than just campus."

In addition to connections across Ames, Pay It Forward members embrace their own consideration of community to carry with them, even after graduating.

Through his time with Pay It Forward, Springman has developed his own definition

of community: "a place where people lean on each other and are always willing to help someone."



Photo Courtesy of Pay It Forward

Bi-weekly meetings are held at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays in Carver Hall 0202. November meetings will take place on Nov. 5 and 19. Upcoming volunteer opportunities include organizing spaces at the Octagon Center for the Arts on Nov. 4 and staffing concession stands at ISU basketball games on Nov. 9 and 16.

For more information or to join Pay It Forward, visit their [Student Organization Database webpage](#) on the Iowa State University Student Engagement website, or connect to their [Instagram](#) (@iastatepif).

The Pride Alliance

[The Pride Alliance](#) offers students a connection to community through identity. Jaymes McShayne, a junior biology student, serves as club president.

He sees the organization's mission as working, "to create a safe space and community for queer students and for allies to queer students." The Pride Alliance's initiatives

combine to provide education and a sense of belonging to students.



Image Courtesy of The Pride Alliance

Alexis Newport, a first-year graduate student studying Applied Linguistics, serves as vice president for the club.

She emphasized the importance of the club on Iowa State's campus. "We know firsthand the power that community can offer and hope to build a safe space for queer students to socialize, build connections and learn from each other," Newport explained.

"Most of the people that I have met through Pride Alliance I most likely would not have met in other circumstances," McShayne said, highlighting the connections made through the club. "Such a wide variety of people from all different majors come to Pride Alliance meetings."

The Pride Alliance extends their connection to the Ames community as well. Events including the Amateur Drag Show in October and the annual Spring Drag Show are open to the public, offering an opportunity for members of the Iowa State University and Ames communities

to appreciate queer art together. "We feel like it's important to give back to our community, and part of this is highlighting queer art," Newport detailed.



Photo Courtesy of The Pride Alliance

Personally, McShayne and Newport also shared how The Pride Alliance has impacted their time at ISU. "Coming into college, it can be hard to find other queer students, creating a feeling of isolation," Newport commented. "Pride Alliance has offered me the space to connect with other people in my community and learn from other perspectives."

"I am a little biased," McShayne admitted, "but I am very glad that an organization such as The Pride Alliance exists on campus."

In creating this community, the club hosts two identity socials per semester, focused on highlighting specific identities. McShayne said that the goal of the identity socials is for students to "meet and connect with others who share similar experiences."

The Bisexual/Pansexual Identity Social was held in October. The club plans to host a Nonbinary+ Social on Nov. 5, 5 p.m. In addition to the socials, The Pride

Alliance also hosts “Gayme Nights” throughout the school year to provide a low-stress environment to meet people in the LGBTQ+ community.



Photo Courtesy of The Pride Alliance

For more information or to join the Pride Alliance, visit their [Student Organizations Database webpage](#) on the Iowa State University Student Engagement website, or connect to their [Instagram](#) (@iowastatepride).

A strong community between members, along with the greater ISU community, are hallmarks of membership in a student organization at Iowa State University. Each of the organizations featured above are uniquely dedicated to expanding connection to community, both on and off campus.

These clubs represent just a few of the many organizations at Iowa State University that help students build connections and find communities that feel most meaningful to them.

Learn more about student organizations at Iowa State University supporting social (environmental and economic) sustainability by visiting the Student Organizations webpage on the [Live Green website](#).



Photo Courtesy of Live Green

Explore all student organizations at Iowa State on the [Student Organizations webpage](#) on the Iowa State University Student Engagement website.

