

# You CAN Come Home Again

Rachel Hurley has come home to her roots. She grew up in rural Missouri and then meandered around the Midwest while earning her Associate's Degree from Indian Hills Community College in Centerville, a BA from Graceland University in Lamoni, then moving to Michigan to obtain her law degree from Michigan State College of Law. Now back in Iowa, Rachel is the state and local government affairs manager for Monsanto, and was recently appointed to the IICorp Board of Directors.

In her position with Monsanto, Rachel works throughout eight upper Midwestern states focusing on state government issues and local affairs impacting agriculture. In her previous position as executive director of the Iowa Biotechnology Association, Rachel advocated at the state and federal level on topics ranging from labeling to patent reform.

"Growing up in rural Missouri and living in southern Iowa for a decade, I know what it's like to see towns die. In both of my most recent roles, I have seen the needs of small and midsize companies in Iowa," she said. "IICorp plays a key role in helping meet those needs. We can be a catalyst. It's the only way we're going to progress as a state."

Rachel believes the time is ripe for innovation in Iowa. "It couldn't be better. The stars are aligned." But, she believes, time is of the essence. "There is every reason to hurry; we're already behind other states."

Since its inception, Rachel has been appointed by the governor to the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Advisory Council where she currently chairs a work group focused on agriculture science within high schools, community colleges & universities – as well as the general public. In this role, she has had many "aha" moments that continue to help guide her on the path she's on today. "First and foremost, especially in Iowa, STEM is agriculture and agriculture is STEM," she said.

It's frustrating to her that many leaders, within and outside of Iowa, don't understand the importance of agriculture outside its traditional roles. "It's baffling how many life-changing things are happening right here in Iowa, using our natural resources, that nobody knows about. We're so busy *doing*, we forget to tell our story." For example, the corn-based active-ingredient for Bounce® and Febreze® products is manufactured in Eddyville.

## Entrepreneurial Forays

Serving on the IICorp board is a natural fit for Rachel; not only does she have executive experience in the biotech world, she's an entrepreneur herself. Her first business venture was in retail; she purchased a Dollar Store franchise in Chariton before leaving the state for law school, but it was more of a learning experience than a successful venture for her. "It's super fun to start a business but not so much to try to keep it going, at least not in those conditions at that time, especially when you are 600 miles away. I really like the ramp-up part of a new business."

Later, she learned a few more lessons the hard way when she got into product development, inventing a product called Fetch-N-Go - a dog fetch toy attached to a leash, keeping the hands free for walking, and eliminating lost toys. "While I did well on the product development and manufacturing end, I didn't do so well at marketing, so I have quite an inventory in my garage," Rachel said. (You can help Rachel out by going to [buyfetchngo.com](http://buyfetchngo.com).)

“It’s through these experiences that I understand how hard it is to start a business and make it successful. Even with a finance, tax & legal background, it was hard for me to manage the regulatory aspects of building a business from the ground up. Most entrepreneurs would agree their time could be better spent focusing on researching and developing their innovations instead of complying with HR regs or dealing with IRS issues. That’s just one of the many ways the IICorp can play a valuable role in the success of Iowa companies.”