

K-State Research & Extension provides research-based information to help people, businesses and

Shawnee County Hosts Kansas State University President

During the 2022-2023 Academic year, Kansas State University President Richard Linton, started regional community visits. As the nation's first operational land-grant university, there was no better way to introduce President Linton to the great state of Kansas, then to spend an entire day in its communities.

On January 23rd the K-State team, including K-state students from Shawnee County, came to Topeka to hear from Shawnee County residents. President Linton introduced new initiatives happening in Manhattan and also talked about K-State 105 the economic development plan being spearheaded by K-State for the benefit of all 105 counties in Kansas.

The locations of the visit included the Kansas Health Institute, Greater Topeka Partnership, Topeka Center for Advanced learning & Careers, Grace Point Church, Harvesters and The Brownstone. To say it was a busy day would be an understatement.

Despite this busy schedule, we invited President Linton to our annual joint PDC meeting, and he showed up! It was an honor to have him at this meeting and see how Shawnee County engages our Program Development Committees.

Regional community visits are now in their second year and the University is committed to get to all parts of the state. These visits are a priority for K-State for the following reasons:

- Establish a consistent opportunity for engaging with, listening to and learning from Kansans directly within the communities they call home.



- Recognize and reaffirm the strong relationships K-State holds with Kansas communities through our K-State Research and Extension network, industry partnerships, community engagement/volunteerism, and educational partnerships
- Strengthen and create new relationships that support Kansas citizens.
- Celebrate our alumni who contribute to Kansas communities, as the K-State graduates who power our state's workforce are integral in building a stronger future for Kansas.
- Empower K-State students from your region to share their K-State experience and how they will take what they have learned to make the world a better place.

The amount of value being placed on K-State Research and Extension by the current university administration is refreshing and humbling. Our county extension offices are an integral part of the Land Grant mission and we were honored to host one of the Regional Community Visits. President Linton-you are welcome back any time!

Educational Efforts Promote Healthy Gardens

Response Line Calls Provide Research-Based Information to Residents

In 2023, Shawnee County Extension Master Gardeners answered 410 calls on their Response Line during the growing season, beginning in April and ending in September. Thirty-nine Master Gardeners took turns answering questions five days a week. The research-based information provided on the Response Line helps homeowners to have healthy plants and encourages best practices for a thriving and sustainable home ecosystem.



SCEMG volunteers answer client lawn, garden, and landscape questions.

Lane Wiens
Horticulture Agent
lwwiens@ksu.edu



Rolling Out the New Kansas Garden Guide

After nearly 15 years, the updated Kansas Garden Guide was released in spring of 2023. The updated guide provides up-to-date information gardeners need to find success with their summer vegetables. With more information on diseases that affect vegetables, harvest indicators, and container gardening, this guide is a fantastic resource for home gardeners. To help promote the Kansas Garden Guide, the Horticulture Agent did a TV interview to get the word out to northeast Kansas residents.



The Horticulture Agent interviewing with KSNT promoting the Kansas Garden Guide.

372

Field, garden, and lawn soil tests completed for Shawnee County residents

22

Youth reached through Tractor and Farm Safety Training

61

Youth reached through YQCA Training

\$120,356

Dollars 4-H youth received from their market animal projects from the Fair Livestock Sale

Sick Plant Clinic Makes a Comeback

With the help of local and state experts, the Sick Plant Clinic was a success! Held annually at the Fairlawn Plaza Mall, this event allows Shawnee County residents to interact with Kansas State University experts to diagnose and treat their plant issues. Nearly 70 community members came with 96 questions, with plant identification and drought problems being the big issues seen.



Dr. Ray Cloyd, KSU Horticulture Entomologist and Chandler Day, KSU Associate Diagnostician, and the Horticulture Agent look at client's plant samples.

Lane Wiens
Horticulture Agent
lwwiens@ksu.edu



Judging Practices Introduce 4-Her's to Horticulture

Throughout the summer, the Horticulture Agent held horticulture judging contest practices, focusing on teaching Shawnee County 4-Her's about plant identification, plant and produce quality judging, and research-based horticultural information. The skills learned promote selecting healthy produce at the grocery store and using best management practices in their home landscapes in the future. At the State Horticulture Judging Contest, two Shawnee County 4-Her's placed in the top 10 individuals overall in their age group.



Nine 4-Her's represent Shawnee County at the State Horticulture Judging Contest, held at KSU.

7,445
Hours donated by Extension Master Gardener Volunteers.

180
Pounds of produce donated

8
Master Gardener demonstration gardens in Shawnee County

15
Statewide Kansas Garden Hour and New Master Gardener Trainings assisted with by the Horticulture Agent.

EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education

Lisa J. Martin, MPH
RD, LD
EFNEP/SNAP-Ed Agent
ljmartin@ksu.edu



Kids at the Market

Kids at the Market, was created and modeled after the Power of Produce (POP) Club® which provides a fun opportunity for children to engage in the local farmers market through conversations with farmers, educational games and demonstrations, and exposure to new seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Youth receive vouchers to spend at the market, allowing them to make their own shopping decisions when choosing fruits and vegetables.

The program was sponsored by Breadbasket Farmers Market and Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Eating Workgroup/Pathways to a Healthy Kansas grant. Shawnee County SNAP-Ed assisted with food demonstrations and educational materials.

Over \$761 of Kids Market vouchers have been redeemed so far, with over 200 children participating.

Teen Cuisine

Twenty-five youth, participated in *Teen Cuisine* at Topeka Center for Advanced Learning & Careers (TCALC).

Teen Cuisine is a series of six hands-on food and nutrition lessons that gives teens the knowledge and skills to prepare healthful meals and snacks.

Recipes included omelets, smoothies, baked chicken fingers and stir-fry. After completed the lessons:

- 25% are eating more vegetables

- 59% are eating more fruit
- 50% are drinking fewer sugary beverages
- 47% are active for at least an hour most days of the week

Fresh Conversations

Fresh Conversations is a newsletter and educational program designed to support healthy aging and independence. Participants at East Topeka Senior Center and Papan's Landing gather at each center to discuss current nutrition and health topics, taste low-cost healthy recipes, and discover new ways to stay active and independent.

Fresh Conversations Success Story—Better than an Apple

A bean dip were served with chips and jicama for a tasting. Merrilee had never heard of jicama before and was hesitant to try it, but with some encouragement from her friends she took a bite and could not believe she had never heard of it before. She said, "I love this; it's better than an apple. "



74%

of EFNEP graduates made changes to be more physically active.

89%

Of EFNEP graduates are making better choices with their food dollars.

98%

Of EFNEP adult clients have improved the quality of their diet.

Food Distribution Map:

https://www.shawnee.ksu.edu/food_distribution_map/index.html

Creating an Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Shawnee County

Candis Meerpohl
County Extension Director
candism@ksu.edu



Extension Community Vitality programs are equal parts partnerships and education. Extension doesn't program for every community vitality need, but we enjoy connecting Shawnee County citizens to the resources available to them.

For years, Shawnee County Extension has worked with Shawnee Startups to help host our county Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, YEC. YEC is a statewide contest for youth to create a business plan, business pitch and a tradeshow booth. The winner of each county contest is invited to the state YEC on the K-State campus every spring. The state contest is organized by Network Kansas and they also sanction the local contests.

In 2023 Shawnee Startups wondered if we could do more to plant the seeds of entrepreneurship in our Shawnee County youth. That conversation led to the creation of the Shawnee County Youth Pitch Contest.

In August extension hosted two learning sessions. The first was *What is a Business Pitch*. The second lesson was *Crafting your pitch*. After the two lessons the youth were ready to compete in the Pitch Contest.

16 youth did the learning sessions and 14 youth pitched in the contest. Thanks to Shawnee Startups we awarded \$1,500 in prize money! We had a panel

of judges from the community and a room full of supporters to watch the youth. The Shawnee County Extension Education Foundation sponsored food and snacks for all of the participants. It was a great evening celebrating the youths creativity and willingness to try their hand at pitching a business. We will definitely be holding the pitch contest again!

Left: JJ Doby placed 3rd at the local YEC contest in 2023 and 1st in the Youth Pitch Contest.

Below: All the contestants and judges at the Youth Pitch Contest.



9
Contestants in the 2023 Shawnee County Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

14
Contestants in the 2023 Shawnee County Youth Pitch Contest

14,539
Number of educational contacts by Shawnee County Extension from Oct. 2022 to Sept. 2023

10
Number of community boards that participated in Board Leadership education series in 2023

Helping Shawnee County Residents Save Money

Susan Fangman
Family & Consumer
Sciences Agent
sfangman@ksu.edu



IRS Trained Volunteers Provide Free Tax Assistance in Shawnee County

Filing a tax return can require a level of financial literacy and knowledge of tax law that many do not possess. It can also be quite expensive. The IRS estimates the value of having a tax return prepared at \$225, but the cost goes up with the number of forms completed on the return. The cost can be a barrier to taxpayers. However, if they don't file, they may miss out on tax credits and deductions they may be entitled to.

Susan oversees the Asset Building Coalition in Shawnee County; the coalition represents VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) and AARP tax volunteers, as well as educational, government, and social services agencies. Together this group provides the space, materials and manpower to provide free tax assistance to those in need.

A new partnership this year with CRC, Care Center at Lundgren has helped the program reach the Oakland community, as well as provide space and time to serve more people in the entire county. CRC graciously agreed to make appointments with VITA



clients at two of the sites ensuring clients and volunteers are making the best use of their time. In the past most sites have operated on a first come first served basis, that often resulted in hours long waits for clients.

During the 2023 filing season (2022 tax year) about 60 volunteers in Shawnee County filed 3,313 federal returns, with a similar number of state returns. Assistance was offered at 6 in-person sites and by mail. Free assistance saved Shawnee County taxpayers about \$745,000 in tax preparation fees. It also helped taxpayers receive \$3,454,735 in total refunds (federal and state), and place on record over \$730,500 in tax liabilities. The average adjusted gross income (AGI) of those served at Shawnee County sites was \$29,568. Free tax assistance has a public value to all taxpayers with refunds contributing to an infusion of money back into the local economy.

Medicare Education Available at the Shawnee County Extension Office

Susan is a trained Senior Health Insurance Counselor (SHICK). She works with new-to-Medicare clients year round to provide free, unbiased, confidential education to Shawnee County Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers. Susan also offers counseling sessions during Medicare open enrollment, helping beneficiaries find the best prescription drug plan for their circumstances.

\$3,454,735

Refunds returned to taxpayers served at Shawnee County tax sites.

3,313

Federal tax returns filed by ABC volunteers

\$745,000

Saved in tax preparation fees (average of \$225 per return).

60

IRS trained VITA & AARP volunteers providing free tax assistance in Shawnee Co.

A Season of Growth for Shawnee County 4-H

Grace Wiens
4-H Youth Development Agent
wiensg@ksu.edu



4-H is Thriving in Shawnee County!

If I could choose one word to describe the current era of Shawnee County 4-H, it would be “growth.” 4-H, like many things, took a hard hit from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the last two years have been focused on building our program back up to strength. Some of our best examples of growth came from Club Day, the County Fair, and our summer interns!

4-H Club Day was held in February. 42 4-Hers gave 58 presentations. We were pleased to see a renewed interest in the Gavel Games parliamentary procedure contest with two teams entered this year, one of which qualified for and competed in the regional contest. We also had 13 participants give presentations for their first time!

One of our big successes of the year was hosting 2 Kansas 4-H Interns. Anna Cohorst and Rachel Donaldson taught 9 programs a week to groups with the Rossville Public Library, Fellowship Hi-Crest, and various Boys and Girls Club locations. The curriculum through this program includes STEM programming from the National 4-H Council and the Kansas Cosmosphere, and ag programs from Kansas Corn Commission. This internship allowed our 4-H program to reach many more youth over the summer than we would be able to in a typical year. In total, they spent 100 hours in direct contact for programming and made 1716 contacts with youth!

The county fair is a staple activity in the 4-H year. 4-Hers work year-round (or sometimes the night before) to put together exhibits that showcase their learning and ability in the project area they have selected. After the 2020 fair, our entry numbers have taken a bit of a hit. We knew it would take time to get our numbers back up, and have worked on both recruiting new 4-H members and on making involvement in 4-H easier to navigate for existing members. Those efforts have paid off, as 20 out of 32 project divisions at the fair this year saw an increase in the number of exhibits that were shown!



164

Number of 4-H Volunteers
Oct. 2022-Sept. 2023

13

4-H Clubs in
Shawnee County
(9 Community Clubs and 4
Project Clubs)

20

Project areas that saw an
increase in exhibits at the
2023 Shawnee County Fair

1,716

Educational Contacts made by
the two 4-H Summer Engage-
ment Interns hosted in
Shawnee County

Volunteer Recognition

Diane Goheen has been a Shawnee County Master Gardener volunteer for 13 years. In her time volunteering with the Master Gardeners, Diane currently serves as the President of the group, as well as chairing the Membership committee for seven years and serving on the Advisory Board for four years.

In her tenure as a Master Gardener, Diane has received the Presidential Volunteer Service Award, which honors those volunteers giving at least 100 hours of time to the community, eight of her thirteen years in the organization. As President of the organization in 2023, Diane did her best to make it to every committee meeting, ensuring that she could effectively serve based on the needs of the organization. She has piloted several ad hoc committees, looking to update the membership records and to develop a new display garden at the Extension Office.

With two new staff in the horticulture offices, Diane has been a fantastic resource for the Agent and Program Assistant when questions on the history of the Shawnee County Master Gardener organization or procedures within the organization arose. The Master Gardeners are a wonderful organization and Diane embodies the group's motto of "Improving our Community Through Horticulture."



Rick Miller has been a volunteer with Shawnee County 4-H for 17 years. Rick has served in many volunteer roles for Shawnee County 4-H. Currently Rick is the county project leader for Photography and Dog, and has also been involved in the Geology and Leadership projects, and has served as the community leader for Auburn 4-H club.

Rick worked with another 4-H volunteer Lisa Pfannenstiel-Garrison to start the Picture Perfect Photo team. This group has provided opportunities not only for youth to learn more photography and leadership skills, but for them to share their skills by hosting a statewide photography workshop each spring. Rick consistently finds a perfect balance of guiding and coaching youth, and providing them space to learn and make progress on their own. In his 2021 nomination packet for Outstanding Lifetime 4-H Volunteer, youth and adult references both shared powerful anecdotes about his service. Some comments that stand out include: "Rick led youth in many different projects and provided feedback that allowed youth to improve and learn from their mistakes. He provided a safe space for 4-Hers to fail and grow in their competencies. He also promoted service to the community and helped lead a variety of 'give-back' projects to agencies in need," and "I have seen very few adults work so hard and so consistently to help my friends and I grow in our projects and as leaders. It has always been clear that Rick cares about each kid he works with... Rick was always there, providing practical advice and encouragement."

There are many amazing volunteers in 4-H, and Rick is at the top of the pack as an excellent representation of 4-H positive youth development.