

Meadowlark Extension District Annual Report for 2020

Please review our 2020 Annual Report. Since March 2020, our Extension District has been in alignment with K-State Research and Extension recommendations concerning the COVID-19 Pandemic. Local and district programs, meetings, events and other activities regardless of their size could not meet face-to-face, forcing modifications to our county fairs and educational programs in the district. Needless to say, 2020 has been challenging and filled with many obstacles to our traditional programming methods.

K-State Research and Extension and the Meadowlark Extension District provides research-based information to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future.

Sincerely,
David Key

Meadowlark Extension District Director

Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

County Fair Community Task Forces Ensured The 2020 County Fairs Could Be Held

COVID-19 and the mandate to discontinue in-person Extension programming forced the need to become more creative in our effort to hold county fairs in the District this year.

Representatives from Extension, Fair Boards, County Commissions, Public Health and Emergency Preparedness were called together, across the District, to discuss plans for the county fair 2020 season. After the three groups met, a Modified In-Person plan for 4-H participation at fairs was developed. This was a good exercise in working with some new and older partners, to keep the focus on the fourth H of 4-H – HEALTH and cross share expertise and knowledge.



As the pandemic has continued and local health requirements adjusted, public health official contact and recommendations continue to be the gold standard response to how we've adjusted 4-H program delivery resulting in reduced in-person activities and our first ever virtual 4-H Achievement celebration.

Global Food Systems

Extension Master Gardener Program Offered

The number of counties/districts able to offer Extension Master Gardener training has traditionally been limited by the time/travel availability of State Specialists.

Over the past couple of years, a group of K-State Research & Extension Horticulture Specialists started looking at online opportunities, rolling out their first Extension Master Gardener online option for the fall of 2020. The Meadowlark Extension District took advantage of the opportunity, enrolling a total of eight volunteers as the inaugural class from the District.

When complete, volunteers will complete 13 weeks of coursework, with volunteer participation totaling almost 275 hours. In return, they will be asked to volunteer in their communities. The primary responsibility of this inaugural group will be to get the program off and running, with hopes of building for the future.

Global Food Systems/Community Vitality

District Ramps Up Social Media Presence

In an effort to reach more people, the Meadowlark Extension District gathered the necessary equipment and knowledge in late 2019 to start doing Agent video recordings for social media. When the pandemic hit, Extension Agents were able to offer multiple recordings on a variety of topics. The recordings are posted on social media and then archived on the Meadowlark Extension District website. As of early December 2020 our recordings have had 36,285 views.



Health

Walk Kansas Completes 20th Year During Pandemic

Through this family and consumer sciences program participants commit to increasing activity and eating more healthfully. Individuals on teams of six work toward averaging 30 minutes of walking or other exercise five days a week.

The state-wide program kicked off in mid-March this year at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when most Kansans were instructed to start working from home and we knew Walk Kansas wouldn't be canceled as we use an online platform for tracking minutes of exercise and communications.

There were 189 participants in the district program this year which wrapped up on May 8. A female participant from Circleville said, "I have participated for several years. It sets me on a good habit of walking, and I encourage others to participate -- walking with others who otherwise would not be motivated to."

Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

4-H Communications Impact

Meadowlark District 4-H members were recently surveyed on the impact of communication skills in 4-H. All respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements.

- I am aware of my body language and non-verbal communication
- I can use technology to help me express my ideas
- I have the confidence to speak in front of groups

- I encourage other team members to give their best effort
- I have improved my communication skills
- I can tailor my message depending on the situation
- I am comfortable sharing my thoughts with others

When asked to tell about an experience where 4-H communication skills have helped you, respondents shared:

"Participating in 4-H club days and 4-H meetings has given me confidence to get up in front of a group. I have worked on clarity in my voice and expression to make presentations more interesting." – 4th grade male

"When I've had to speak at school programs I felt more confident." – 7th grade male

"I was able to go to a job interview with confidence." – 10th grade male

Global Food Systems / Health

Food Preservation Workshop Conducted at Prairie Band Indian Reservation

Partnering with the Prairie Band Indian Reservation our regional SNAP-Ed specialist the Meadowlark Extension District held an educational, hands-on



A mini hands-on canning workshop was held to help teach safe, reliable means of canning salsa.

food preservation workshop on making salsa. The workshop followed a gardening workshop that was held to teach participants how to grow vegetables for salsa.

Sixteen Native American men and women learned safe, reliable means of preserving salsa. Some of the comments shared following the workshop included: “Learned valuable skills and requirements to safely can salsa.” “Wouldn’t have learned this information or sought it out otherwise.” “Glad to know that K-State has online resources available to look at any time.” “I learned how to can and now I look forward to teaching my family the new skills I have learned.” “I used to can foods with my mom years ago and today I learned many new methods.” Plans are to continue offering additional workshops when face to face meetings are permissible.

Global Food Systems / Water

Blue/Green Algae Pond Mitigation Project

The Meadowlark Extension District partnered with Kansas Department of Health & Environment, Kansas Veterinary Diagnostics Lab, Watershed Specialists and private landowners for a pond mitigation project. Eight ponds in the Meadowlark District were used in the study. Some of the ponds had Barley straw installed to study the effects that it might have on harmful algae blooms, Blue/Green algae in particular the remaining ponds acted as the control. Straw bales were installed in June and then again in August. KDHE personnel tested the ponds each month with final results available in late January 2021.



Global Food Systems

Tailgate Talks

For the past two years, the Meadowlark Extension District has offered a three session pasture management program entitled Tailgate Talks. Producers are invited to monthly meetings ‘in the pasture’ to discuss topics like grass growth and development, measuring to manage, weed control, plant identification, fencing, and watering systems.

With summer meetings limited by COVID-19, presenters were asked instead to record their portion of the program to be shared via the Meadowlark Extension District Facebook page and YouTube. Presentations were edited and then uploaded throughout the summer.

Typical participation averages around 60 participants per summer. Four video offerings this summer resulted in 658 views, with each session averaging almost twice as many viewers as our typical in person meetings generate.

Global Food Systems

Farm Financial Skills for Women Program

Meadowlark Extension District Agents hosted a site for an innovative educational series designed to reach to women in agriculture. Designed by K-State Research and Extension, the District partnered with Jefferson-Leavenworth Soil Conservation Districts, Taylor Insurance, Assured Title and the Colonial Acres Event Center in Oskaloosa.

The four-week series had a combination of live speakers and speakers via ZOOM to discuss record



keeping, balance sheet accounting, family living expenses, cash flows and much more.

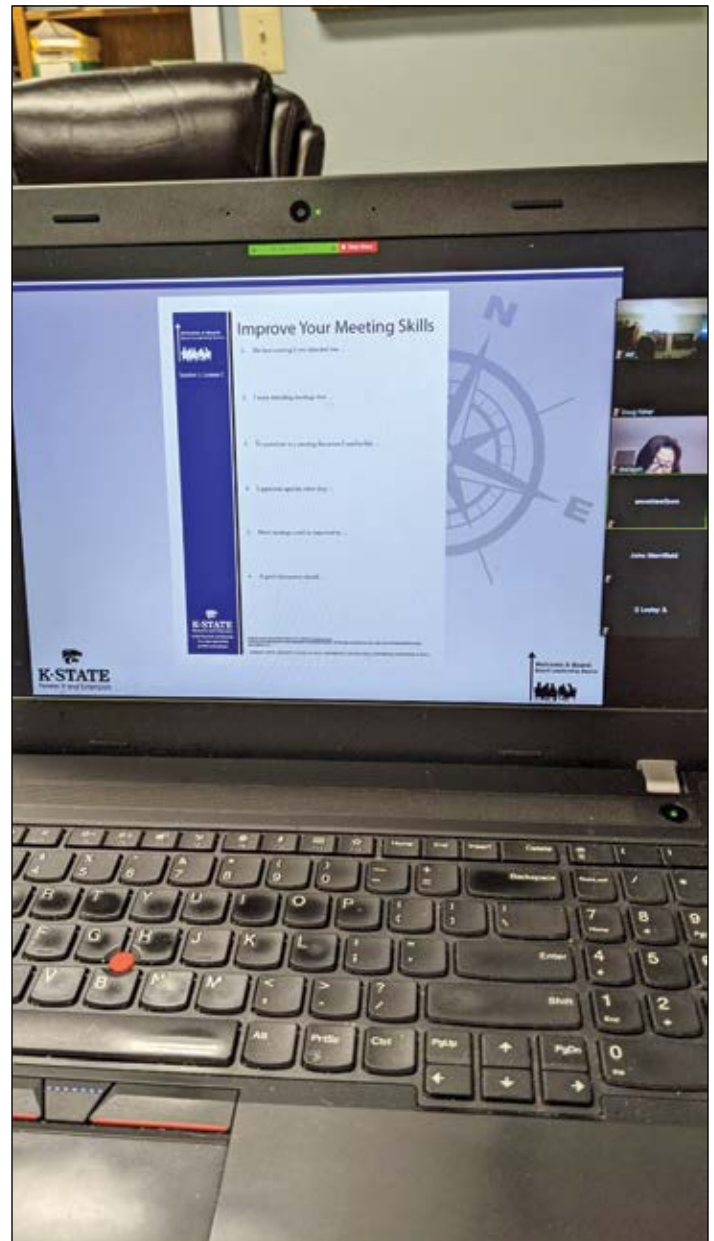
One important session in the series was an educational session led by one of our District agents on family budgeting. The session encouraged participants to check their credit report every three months to understand the importance of receiving a routine credit report and to monitor their finances. 18 farm families now have a better understanding of family budgeting, how it fits into the farm income in order to pick up on mistakes, correct them and help to save money in the long run.

As part of this effort, the programming group won the Team Award at the 2020 K-State Research and Extension Annual Extension Conference for their efforts.

Community Vitality

Board Leadership Series Targets New Leaders

The Meadowlark Extension District hosted the 2020 Welcome A-Board Leadership series in an online format targeting participants who are new to community leadership or those just wanting a refresher course. Twenty-one participants signed up for the three-part series. Participants noted significant gains in understanding the 10 Key Responsibilities of a Board and have a better understanding of the problems that prevent a successful meeting. Common responses from participants included the following: “The session reinforces my understanding and enhances my knowledge and gives me more confidence” and “Your list of top meeting problems from last week highlights one board meeting that I frequently attend where multiple of these problems recur monthly!”



Meadowlark Extension District – Nemaha, Jackson, and Jefferson Counties

K-STATE Research and Extension

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Seneca Office
Nemaha County
1500 Community Dr.
Seneca, KS 66538-9786
Phone: 785-336-2184

Holton Office
Jackson County
114 West 5th Street
Holton, KS 66436-1791
Phone: 785-364-4125

Oskaloosa Office
Jefferson County
PO Box 326
100 E. Washington
Oskaloosa, KS 66066-0326
Phone: 785-863-2212

www.meadowlark.ksu.edu