It may not be a surprise in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows that health is Americans’ most common New Year’s resolution. After health, Americans’ top resolutions in 2021 are self-improvement, money and family. If so, we have just the series of educational programs that are being hosted by K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Science agents in the NE Area Region.

Titled “Living Well Together” offers free online seminars that are designed to enhance Kansas’ time at home, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic when many of us are home more than usual. Anyone is welcome to join in on any of these sessions as they will be held every Thursday evening from 6:45 p.m. and will last about 45 minutes in length, with 15 minutes left for questions. These programs are “free”, but registration are required. These sessions will be held from January 7 through March 25, with a variety of topics being offered.

For the February the following will be held:

February 4 — A Parent’s Guide to Social Media. Do you know what phone apps are the most popular in the US? Join John Calvert, Director of Safe & Secure Schools Unit, as he teaches us about what apps to be aware of on our child’s phone. (This session is for adults only)

February 11 — Love Languages — Relationships grow better when we understand each other. Everyone gives and receives love differently, but with a little insight into these differences, we can be confidently equipped to communicate love well.

February 18 — Make Active Habits Stick. If becoming more physically active is on your list of goals this year, we can help. Learn how to create new habits and routines to make change stick. After all, the best physical activity is the one you’ll actually do!

February 25 — Living Well with Diabetes. Diabetes is a common, costly, and serious disease. Let’s discuss how diabetes can be delayed, controlled, and even prevented.

Use the registration link or QR code to register for these February sessions. You will need to re-register for the March sessions. Sessions will be conducted in Central Time zone and will be recorded for later viewing. Once you register, a Zoom link will be sent to the registrant’s email address.

The programs being offered in March include the following:

March 4 — Check Your Credit — is a fairly new program at K-State that reminds you to check your credit every few months. This program is free and more information will be shared as to how to get signed up for this program.

March 11 — Med Instead of Meds — will be looking at your overall eating pattern and learn more about the “Blue Zones” and what their food habits involve to have a positive outcome.

March 18 — Family Meal Time — Meal times can be a challenge for busy families. Come learn more about how to make it possible for your family.

Match 25 — Science of Sleep — Getting Good Rest — Every have a case of insomnia? If so join us to learn more how important sleep is and what can be done to help your chances of getting a better nights rest.

Registration for these March session will be coming out the middle of February and with one registration link you can sign up for one or all of the March sessions. Registration is required and once you sign up, an email zoom link will be sent to you. All sessions will be recorded and sent to you if you pre-register.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact Cindy Williams, at 785-863-2212 or csw@ksu.edu. We hope that you can join us for one or all of these sessions!

http://bit.ly/LivingWellTogether – Jan-
**Broomsedge Bluestem**

The terms control and broomsedge bluestem don’t fit very well in the same sentence. Broomsedge has lots of characteristics that make it beyond competitive in our cool season dominated forage stands: warm-season growth pattern + ability to tolerate low fertility soils + allelopathic influences on more desirable forages. For these reasons – and plenty of others - it’s got a pretty daunting track record when it comes to taking over brome and fescue stands.

That doesn’t mean you can’t do some good against it. A study recently published in an American Society of Agronomy publication recently outlined efforts by scientists at the University of Missouri to reclaim stands overrun with broomsedge. Their findings: making the base forage (in this case fescue) competitive helped increase the stand of desirable plants while slightly reducing broomsedge as a part of the stand.


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**New Trees and Lawn Grasses**

If a new tree(s) planting is on your to-do list for spring 2021, now is not only a good time to start researching your selection, but planning ahead to make it successful. Recent research from K-State’s John C. Pair Horticultural Center has some useful information that might be of value.

In their study, three horticulture specialists evaluated the potential for slowed growth of transplanted, seedling trees when lawn grasses were allowed to grow right up to the trunk. Their study included three grasses – fescue and bluegrass being two of them – allowed to grow under the tree plus an area under the tree that was mulched and a treatment where bare soil was maintained with herbicides. Trees were fertilized as recommended and watered as necessary. After two years, tree measurements were collected – with interesting results.

**First, there were no differences in any measure between the mulched and bare soil treatments. All measures showed significant growth increases if lawn grasses were controlled around the tree.**

**Second, if grasses were allowed to grow under the tree, their leaf weight when grasses were controlled.**

**Both species in the study – pecan and redbud – showed significant increases in top growth and leaf area/leaf weight when grasses were controlled.**

Bottom line: grass control under a newly transplanted tree is imperative to maximize growth. For best results, a minimum of three feet of bare ground or mulch should be used to keep weed/grass growth from any District Office.

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**Pruning Fruit Trees**

One of the gardening tasks fruit growers can get accomplished from now through March (as long as wood isn’t frozen) is pruning. The task might be a little daunting, but it doesn’t have to be if you think about the following rules:

* Removed dead, diseased, or damaged branches first
* Look for branches that form narrow angles, next. They’re weak and can break during storm events or heavy fruit load. Prune them out as well.
* If you see branches growing straight up from the trunk or major branches, they are likely suckers and can be removed.
* Branches rubbing? Remove at least one of the two.
* Remove low branches that interfere with harvest, pruning, or mowing.
* Cut back branches to reduce the total size of the tree, if necessary.
* Thin branches on the interior of the tree.


Both publications are also available upon request from any District Office.
New Board Member Resource-A Checklist for Success!

Being on a board is important—it will take up a lot of your time. If you are asked to be on a board, your contribution was requested for any of the following reasons:

You are a representative of an important sector of our population.
You are skilled.
You are independent.
You were available and willing to serve.

You don’t have to give your answer immediately. Ask questions to help you determine if you want to serve. Ask about the time commitment; if there are any financial commitments. (Some organizations may require board members to contribute money.) Ask to see a copy of the mission statement, the board manual, and the last annual report if one exists. Current board members and staff of the organization will appreciate your thoughtful and professional approach to making this important decision. To help you prepare for joining a board, review the following checklist for potential board members to complete before you accept the position.

Knowledge and preparation

Educate myself on the organization, its history and goals
Educate myself on clients/constituency, staff, current status, problems and needs
Keep abreast of national, state, and local trends that affect the organization and its constituency

Educate myself on the role and responsibility of the board as a whole as well as individual board members

Participation

Participate in the tasks of the board
Be enthusiastic and knowledgeable voice for the organization
Serve actively on at least one committee
Understand how committees relate to the board
Act as an advocate for the organization and its clientele
Contribute financially to the organization if agreed upon by the board
Participate in discussions at meetings, ask probing questions and seek relevant answers before voting
Report to the board in verbal or written form as appropriate
Recognize my role as a member of a team

Time commitment

Attend board orientation and training
Attend board meetings, committee meetings and general membership meetings
Do assigned work between meetings including preparing for meetings by reading reports and background material

Constraints

Support board decisions once they’re made, even if I voted against the decision, or resign if I can’t
Avoid any possibility of conflict of interest
Understand the difference between the roles of the board and the staff—don’t attempt to do the staff’s job, or let them do yours

Additional Learning

Attend a board meeting or interview someone who is a member of a board that you are interested in be a part of or that you want to know more about.

What did you learn from your experience? For more information regarding this topic please visit with your local extension office about the Welcome A-Board Leadership Training Program.

Adapted from Step Up to Leadership- A curriculum for developing community leaders- Publication M172 published by University of Missouri Extension
4-H Communications

It’s been estimated that the average person spends 50 to 80 percent of their time communicating in some way throughout the day. No matter who you are or where you come from, communication takes practice! The good news for 4-H participants is that communication is at the core of the 4-H experience, even if it is an indirect focus. 4-H members are noted for being fluent, comfortable speakers and communicators. 4-H activities from the local community club to national levels help 4-Hers learn how to be an effective public speaker, learn how to actively listen and respond to resolve conflict, and practice self-expression and creativity.

One of the annual activities that puts communications/presentation skills on display is 4-H Club Day. 4-H Club Day activities are an important phase of local 4-H programming. 4-H Day provides additional opportunities for 4-H members to further develop their skills, self-confidence, and personal developments as they learn and have fun with others in their club and county/district. The net result is to help 4-H youth have a good experience and to feel good about WHO they are and WHAT they have done.

4-H CLUB DAY OBJECTIVES are really communication focused!

To demonstrate the value of the 4-H Youth Development program through public presentation & evaluation of 4-Hers showcasing: Demonstrations, Talks, Parliamentary Procedures and Performing Arts.

Give 4-Hers an opportunity to learn skills and gain confidence in their abilities to exercise parliamentary procedure, speak effectively and give creative performances in the arts.

To provide opportunity for fellowship and wider acquaintance among 4-H’ers. To exchange information regarding 4-H project work to others.

To present a favorable image to the public and to promote 4-H. While we typically invite public audiences to participate in this showcase in-person, our current environment has offered opportunity to share in digital formats to the community, which is in itself a life skill!

Another example of 4-Hers honing communication skills, can be found in participation in one of the many regional, state and national 4-H events. While each has its own specific purpose, all of these events provide opportunity for youth to interact and exchange ideas with peers from a wide geographic, cultural and diverse area. Participating in these educational events and learning opportunities expands the 4-Her’s knowledge and skills communications. Examples include: 4-H Camp, Citizenship in Action, Kansas 4-H Discovery Days, Citizenship Washington Focus, Kansas 4-H Youth Leadership Forum, to name a few.

A focus for the Kansas 4-H program in the 2020-2021 program year, has been to provide curriculum and training to Communication project leaders. Meadowlark District has seven community clubs participating in this effort. Using National 4-H Council 4-H Council’s 4-H Communications Curriculum, the trainers are offering a series of webinars to train club volunteers to utilize six lesson plans with their 4-H members. Club leaders and other club volunteers facilitate lessons during their monthly club meetings as part of their educational program time. This strengthens and ensures hands on learning, youth engagement and communications skill building for all club members.

We anxiously await evaluation at the end of this programming cycle, to see if measurable change can be captured through this effort. The last, state-wide survey of over 2,600 young people, showed that by year three of participation in 4-H, the 4-H member had a 60% increase in their confidence in public speaking, communication skills. Communication is at the core of healthy relationships and 96% of that same group reported working successfully with adults and having caring friends. 4-H programming is documented to play a vital role in helping youth achieve future success.

In summary; what may seem like a routine part of the monthly 4-H program at a Club meeting or appears to simply be teenagers participating in a leadership camp, is truly purposeful, meaningful development of communication skills of the youth member. This is just one of many life-skills that the 4-H program works to develop in the youth we serve.

If you think this is something you would like for young person in your life, we invite you to check out what 4-H has to offer at:

https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/4h/ or https://www.kansas4-h.org

Upcoming District 4-H Events

4-H Club Day

February 20—Oskaloosa

March 6—Sabetha

Good luck to all participants.
Prepare for Calving Season

Whether calving season will start soon or it is a few months away, it’s never a bad time to prepare for the new crop of calves. It all begins with meeting the cow or heifer’s nutritional needs. Nutrition is significant before calving due to the rapidly growing fetus, mammary regeneration and the making of colostrum. Body Condition scores is important as it impacts stamina during calving, colostrum quality, calf vigor and then rebreeding. Optimum scores would be BCS 5 or 6 for young and mature cows.

Work with your veterinarian to review your herd health plan. If you have had health issues in the past, it’s important to review these with your veterinarian.

If you are using calving pens, make sure they are in working order, make sure head gates are working.

Of course there are always some supplies you want to have on hand:

OB gloves, OB lubricant, OB chains or straps, calf puller, halter and rope, iodine to apply on calf’s navel, syringes, oxytocin or epinephrine, frozen colostrum or packaged colostrum replacer, tube feeder, electrolytes, tags and marker, bander and bands. Paper towels or rags are always helpful.

Review the stages of calving and when to intervene:

The first stage is preparing to calve, this can last 2 to 6 hours. The calf is rotating to upright position, contractions begin and the water sac is showing. The cow or heifer will be restless, stops eating and drinking and vaginal discharge can be seen.

The second stage is delivery, usually one hour or less. Cow is usually lying down, the calf enters the birth canal, front feet and nose appear. At this point the cow or heifer will be straining, one to three times a minute. Then the calf is born.

The third stage is cleaning, this can take 2 to 8 hours. The “button” attachments in the uterus are relaxing in order to be expelled. Finally the placenta is passed. If a cow does not “clean” consult your veterinarian.

Colostrum is the first milk produced by the mother after birth. This milk is high in nutrients and antibodies, that are critical for the health of the calf. Calves need 2 quarts within 4 hours of birth and one gallon within 12 hours. Time is critical as the newborn calf’s digestive tract allows antibodies to pass directly into the blood. Frozen colostrum from previous births or store bought is another option.

Hopefully, the weather will hold but if it does not, have a plan to warm calves that are born in frigid temperatures or wet, cold conditions. Calves can quickly die to hypothermia. Feeding them warm colostrum and warming them up can help. If you give them a warm bath, make sure they are completely dry before returning them to their mother.

A new calf crop is exciting and shows the efforts of all your work thus far!
Healthy and Safe Meals Using a Slow Cooker

Americans’ busy lifestyles often show up in their cooking and eating habits. More than 54 percent of food dollars are spent on food away from home, which is typically higher in calories, fat and lower in calcium, fiber, and iron. Planning meals ahead can improve healthy while saving time and money. When families eat together, meals are likely to be more nutritious. Family meals also provide a great time for children and parents to reconnect. One way to increase meals at home is to use a slow cooker. Check out the following information on slow cooker benefits, food safety and recipe ideas.

Benefits, food safety, and recipe ideas:

**Slow cooker benefits.** They use less electricity than an oven and can be used year-round. Because of the long, low-temperature cooking, slow cookers help tenderize less-expensive cuts of meat. They usually allow for one-step preparation; putting all the ingredients in the slow cooker saves time and reduces cleanup. A variety of foods can be cooked in a slow cooker, including soups, stews, side dishes, main dishes, meats, poultry, and desserts.

**Know your slow cooker.** Most slow cookers have two or three settings. Food typically cooks in six to 10 hours on the low setting and four to six hours on the high setting. If possible, turn the slow cooker on the high setting for the first hour of cooking time and then use the setting that fits your needs. Read your slow cooker instruction manual and follow manufacturers’ directions. Slow cookers are available in different sizes, so instructions will vary.

**Slow cookers and food safety.** Begin with a clean cooker, utensils and work area. Keep perishable foods refrigerated until preparation time. Store cup-up meat and vegetables separately in the fridge. Always thaw meat or poultry before putting it into a slow cooker. Vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry, so if using them, put vegetables in first. Then add meat and liquid suggested in the recipe, such as broth, water or sauce. Keep the lid in place, removing only to stir the food or check for doneness.

**Safely handle leftovers.** Do not store leftovers in a deep container, such as the slow cooker. Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking is completed. Reheating leftovers in a slow cooker is not recommended. Cooked food should be heated on the stove, in a microwave, or in a conventional oven until it reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit (F). Then the hot food can be placed in a preheated slow cooker to keep it hot for serving, at least 140 degrees (F) as measured.

**Recipe conversions.** Most recipes can be converted. Because liquids do not boil away in a slow cooker, you can usually reduce liquids by one-third to one-half. This reduction in liquid does not apply to soups. Pasta may become mushy if added too early, so it could be added at the end of cooking process or cooked separately and added just before serving. Milk, cheese and cream may be added one hour before serving.

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**Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup**

Yield: 8 servings

**Ingredients:**
3 Chicken breasts, boneless, skinless  
2 (14.5 ounce) cans diced tomatoes with mild green chilies  
2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained  
1 (15 ounce) can tomato sauce, no salt
1 (4 ounce) can green chilies  
1 cup salsa  
1 cup frozen corn (optional)  
Cheese, shredded (optional)  
Cooked rice or corn chips (optional)  
Fresh cilantro, gently rubbed under cold running water, chopped (optional)

**Directions:**

Wash hands with soap and water. Spray slow cooker with non-stick cooking spray. Place chicken breasts in bottom of slow cooker. Wash hands with soap and water after handling uncooked chicken. Add tomatoes, black beans, tomato sauce, green chilies, salsa and corn, if desired. Gently mix. Cook on low for 8-10 hours or on high for 4 to 6 hours and until internal temperature of the chicken reaches 165°F as measured with a food thermometer. Thirty minutes before serving, remove chicken breasts and shred. Return chicken to slow cooker and stir. Optional, serve over rice or top with cheese, tortilla chips or cilantro, if desired.
Resilient Families: Opportunities to Build Strengths

Parents are role models in helping children overcome tough times. Bradford Wiles, a child development specialist with K-State Research and Extension says you’re building resilience.

He said it doesn’t require a global pandemic for people to become more resilient, which some may think of as ‘toughness,’ or having the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. In more normal times, parents are routinely preparing their children for the world ahead of them.

Wiles said building resilience often takes a lot of time: “And further, it’s not just about money. There are plenty of people who have lots of money who are still quite vulnerable. Resilience is a process that acts across all socio-economic statuses; everybody, regardless of their financial status, is subject to risk. Being mindful to how resilience is built in families is critical.”

One of the most important ways parents encourage resilience is by spending quality time interacting with their children, even when they’re very young. I particularly advocate reading with children, but also playing with them. Telling stories and spending time together builds a relationship so that when things get challenging as the kids older, there’s a secure base for them to able to reference and work from,” Wiles said.

He leads the team in the K-State laboratory, Applied Research in Child Health and Enhancing Resilience, known as ARCHER, which studies factors that build health and resilience in vulnerable families and children.

For many the current pandemic might be the most challenging time of your lifetime. There is a real opportunity for building resiliency and practicing it.

“Resilience is both a product and a process,” Wiles said. “It’s something that can result after the pandemic, for example, but it’s also a product that is generated during the pandemic.”

Thus, the lessons learned and sacrifices made are not solely to get past a difficult time. For parents, it’s part of helping children understand that they have the strength – the resilience – to handle tough times in their own lives.

“I think it’s important to say to parents that they are not going to be perfect in helping their children learn these lessons, and nobody expects them to be perfect. One of the biggest elements of all this is forgiving ourselves for the mistakes we make.”

“But we are role models, and we are the people who children are looking to for guidance on how to manage things, how to handle our emotions, how to handle relationships and how to handle extreme stress; and even minor things like how to handle wearing a mask, where we go and how long we choose to visit with people.”

Wiles said the pandemic is one of the times in our lives that represents an opportunity to be good role models for children. “While it’s difficult now, it’s also an opportunity to really invest ourselves in our children and make them feel a part of us in ways that we simply couldn’t do before because we were going about our daily lives outside of the home.”

Resilience, he said, also is built in more ways, such as parents’ enforcing safe hygiene and health practices, or even playing a board game as a family.

“It may seem to you like that’s just playing a game,” Wiles said, “but that activity is an element of building resilience. When you talk to your children about family resources – time, money and a talent – you’re not setting out to say, ‘okay I’m going to build
Upcoming Events


4-H Club Day
Oskaloosa—February 20th
Sabetha—March 6th

2021 Welcome A-Board Leadership Basics Mini Series

February 23, 2021 “Organized Groups and How They Function and What Is Your Role When Asked To Serve”

March 2, 2021 “Duties and Responsibilities of Non-Profit Board Members and Organizing and Leading Productive Meetings”

March 9, 2021 Financial Responsibilities, Fund Raising, Legalities and Ethics of Non-Profit Boards

March 16, 2021 Strategic Planning for Non-Profit Boards and Groups

JOIN US FOR WALK KANSAS 2021!

SAVETHEDATE

PROGRAM BEGINS MARCH 28, 2021

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