Meadowlark Extension District
2020 Mid-Year Special Report

Dear Meadowlark Extension District Supporters

For the past several months 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 through most of the early spring and summer forcing modifications to our county fairs and other educational programs in the district. Needless to say, 2020 has been, and continues to be, challenging and filled with many obstacles to our traditional programming methods.

We never stop learning in extension and our staff was able to adapt to new ways to provide educational content with your support and patience.

Please review this special mid-year edition of the Extension Response highlighting some of our programming efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,
David Key
Meadowlark Extension District Director

Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders

Virtual Youth Development

4-H Youth Development is based upon a learning model of Do, Reflect, Apply and typically in a “hands on” learning environment. COVID-19 and the mandate to discontinue in-person Extension programming forced us to become creative in distance delivery. Multiple approaches were used to keep a connection with our youth and adult volunteers this year.

One example was a five-week Virtual Competition challenge where members submitted photos or videos in different categories. Many members shared informational videos about their project areas and project work.

Health

Walk Kansas Adapts—Completes 20th Year

Walk Kansas is an eight-week, team-based program that encourages Kansans to accumulate miles through walking or other physical activity, and – using a map of Kansas – monitor their progress past points of interest across the state.

Nearly the same day that Kansans started staying home due to the looming COVID-19 pandemic, organizers of the K-State Research and Extension...
Walk Kansas program were telling them to get out and walk! The two events merged well since many local health authorities had determined that outdoor exercise was an allowable activity during stay-at-home orders. When face-to-face meetings were canceled the use of an online system to keep in touch with participants was a valuable tool to extend knowledge and offer support to the 189 participants that enrolled this year.

A participant from Circleville stated “I have participated in this program 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.”

**Global Food Systems**

*Educational recordings for livestock producers a successful way to reach out*

Faced with the mandate to discontinue in-person Extension Programming District agents became a little more creative this year. Using the equipment and technology available to them, agents began working on subject specific educational videos designed to inform and educate viewers on livestock production, management and water quality topics. Short recordings were made about Cattle Ear Tags, Measure to Manage Grasses, Geo-Textile Fabric, Outside Hay Storage, Broom Sedge Bluestem Control and the use of a Grazing Stick in Pasture Management. The 2 to 3 minute videos have been viewed more than 3,400 times through our social media outlet.

**Community Vitality**

*Welcome A-Board Leadership Series Targets New Leaders in Communities*

The K-State Research and Extension Board Leadership series received a face lift in 2019 and was offered for the first time in a complete online format earlier this year targeting participants who are new to community leadership or those who want a refresher course. Thirteen of the lessons were offered in three mini-sessions in February and March. Comments from participants included: “Thank you very much for your very informative session last night. I think the exercise is brilliant and the message was very clear. The session reinforces my understanding and enhances my knowledge and gives me more confidence.” Sheila Y

“Your list of top meeting problems from last week highlights one board meeting that I frequently attend where multiple of these problems recur monthly!” Jayson P.
Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders
Citizenship Project Teaches Valuable Skills

Prosperity 4-H member Jayden Herrman, gave a project talk in January on the Citizenship project. He explained that citizenship can be demonstrated in many different ways. It’s not only providing a tangible item or service to meet a need, but can be as simple as sharing a friendly smile and encouraging someone.

Jayden went one step further, and challenged club members to fill his plastic tote with basic household and hygiene essentials at the next club meeting, which would be donated to the Valley Falls Food Pantry. Prosperity members rose to the challenge and filled not one, but two totes before physical 4-H meetings were shut down.

Water
Blue-Green Algae Pond Mitigation Project

The Meadowlark Extension District joined a group of state agencies this winter to address blue green algae in ponds. Harmful algae bloom has been occurring during the summer months and is toxic to animals. Demonstration sites using Barley straw bales anchored to pond banks were set up across the District this spring as part of the statewide Blue-Green Algae Pond Mitigation project. Initial studies have indicated that Barley straw when allowed to decay in water releases chemicals that will kill the algae.

Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders
COVID-19 Crisis not Stopping the District 4-H Program

COVID-19 and the mandate to discontinue in-person Extension programming forced the need to become more creative in their effort to keep a connection with youth and adult volunteers.

The following strategies were adopted by the District 4-H team:

• MED Question and Answer Zoom sessions for families to address “Hot Topic” questions related to 4-H
• A Distance Learning Resource web page was created to provide a landing spot for digital delivery of 4-H information
• Zoom became our go to platform for 4-H volunteers and clubs to gather and meet
• Microsoft TEAMS was utilized to allow staff to connect on a regular basis
• Drop box/drop off locations were established for each office
• An online livestock tagging request process was developed for families to order tags via Google forms
• Virtual competitions were held via social media to keep 4-H members involved
• State sponsored 4-H events were promoted and held as virtual experiences
• County Fair Community Taskforces were organized for each fair in the District consisting of Extension, Fair Board, Public Health, Emergency Management and County Commissioners to seek
input on the development of a modified in person plan for each fair

- COVID mitigation and meeting guidance was developed and shared with

4-H community club leaders allowing them to begin the process of “reopening” in-person activities in early July.

Global Food Systems
Community Vitality
Home Gardeners and Landscapers Benefit from Video Resources

Pandemics might alter the way we do business, but they don’t affect the way plants grow. Periodic videos posted to our District Facebook page pre-COVID morphed quickly into weekly horticulture related posts as shutdowns persisted. Topics were selected based on what the home gardener or landscaper might be seeing or thinking about as they, too, were abiding by stay at home orders. Weekly videos have been produced this spring and summer with more than 1,600 views. More videos are planned and will be structured so they can be recorded from home, using freeware programs and then uploaded to our social media outlet.

Global Food Systems
Health
Food Preservation Education Essential During Pandemic

In a “normal” year, home canners are encouraged to bring their dial gauges to the extension office to be tested, due to the COVID-19 pandemic we had to get creative. Home canners were asked to put their dial gauges in a paper sack, with their name and number on it and leave it at the front door of our office with written results and a follow up phone call being made.

Sadly, the educational contact was missing that would usually occur when working the home canner. To help meet this challenge a simple one-page food preservation newsletter was created to help educate and inform those interested called “Simply Tasteful Food Ideas and Food Preservation Tips.” Published every other month this newsletter supports another multi-state food safety newsletter published by K-State Research and Extension and the University of Missouri Extension.