

Meadowlark Extension District Programming Report for 2025

Since 2006 our Extension District has been in alignment with K-State Extension and provides research-based information to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future. Here are a few extension programming highlights we would like to share with you from 2025.

Sincerely,
David Key, Meadowlark Extension District Director

Community Vitality

Regional Tourism Conference a Big Hit Again

The Meadowlark Extension District helped organize and sponsor the 2nd annual regional Agritourism workshop that was held on March 10 at the PBPB Casino. We had 71 registrants and 65 attend the day long workshop that focused on the gold standard of customer service, using AI and social media and marketing. This workshop is a result of the MED initiating a planning team with Washburn SBDC and Kansas Agritourism. Those attending got to network with and hear from Washburn SBDC, Kansas Agri Tourism and the Land of Kansas.



Health

Preventing Falls and Promoting Independence Among Older Kansans

Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults. They threaten the health and independence of older Kansans and place significant burdens on families, caregivers, and healthcare systems.

To address this critical issue, Meadowlark Extension District Family and Consumer Science and Family Wellness agents facilitated three evidence-based programs across Jackson, Jefferson, and Nemaha counties:

- **“A Matter of Balance”** – Focuses on reducing the fear of falling and building confidence to engage in activities that support well-being.
- **“Stay Strong, Stay Healthy”** – Improves strength, flexibility, and balance through a progressive exercise routine.
- **Arthritis Foundation “Walk With Ease” Program** – Reduces arthritis symptoms and promotes regular physical activity.

Participants reported significant improvements both physically and socially. They reduced their fear of falling, learned techniques for safely getting up after a fall, and made impactful home safety changes.

Participant Feedback:

“I think my balance is better, and I feel stronger.”

“I feel better about staying in my home after doing the home safety check.”

In 2025, the Meadowlark District conducted three **“A Matter of Balance”** programs, four **“Stay Strong, Stay Healthy”** programs, and one **“Walk With Ease”** program, serving 103 individuals. This initiative delivered measurable results: 22 falls were prevented over the next three years, generating **\$281,358 in direct healthcare cost savings**.

These programs provide high-impact, evidence-based solutions that improve health outcomes and deliver significant cost savings for our community.



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Nemaha Co. Office

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Walk Kansas 2025 Reports Success

Walk Kansas is an 8-week health initiative (team based or solo) founded on the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. It is offered through extension offices throughout the Meadowlark Extension District. Participants log physical activity, fruit/vegetable, and water consumption. Teams and individuals select a challenge and report regularly through the interactive online system. Weekly newsletters and webinars provide educational information.

In 2025, the Meadowlark Extension District reported 253 participants, 43 teams and 12 solo teams, which resulted in an increase of over 100 participants from last year. The following were reported because of increased physical activity and fruit/vegetable consumption during Walk Kansas:

- 45% increased energy
- 21% increased muscle strength
- 38% increased endurance
- 16% lower blood pressure
- 6% lower blood cholesterol
- 28% decreased weight
- 43% reported improved mood and a better outlook on life
- 33% better sleep
- 14% stronger social support/connectedness
- 15% better able to focus and concentrate

Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) - Building Financial Knowledge for Sound Decisions

The Meadowlark Extension District offers free, unbiased Medicare counseling to residents of Jackson, Jefferson, and Nemaha counties. A SHICK-certified counselor provides personalized assistance on a variety of topics, including:

- Guidance for those new to Medicare
- Support during Medicare Open Enrollment
- Understanding other insurance that works with Medicare
- Help with appeals and coverage issues

In 2025, approximately 175 Medicare beneficiaries received assistance through the SHICK program in the district. During Medicare Open Enrollment alone, the Meadowlark District helped save beneficiaries \$145,000. These savings make prescription drugs more affordable, improving medication adherence and overall health outcomes.

Global Food Systems

Northeast Kansas Livestock Summit Youth Education

This event was a great partnership between the Jackson County Farm Bureau, Jackson County Livestock Association and Meadowlark Extension District as it was opened regionally to youth in 2025. In addition to YQCA certification, educated, caring adults working with teen youth leadership to delivered specie specific breakouts on selection and showmanship. It was a very successful event reaching nearly 100 youth and garnering positive feedback in delivery. The goal of helping start the new 4-H year off on the right foot with selection, daily care, handling and showmanship was accomplished.



Armyworm Battles

The summer 2025 brome growing season brought some of the heaviest fall armyworm pressure we've seen in the district, with many hay fields exhibiting significant feeding pressure. With a little heads up due to our moth trapping network in the district, we were able to encourage early scouting ahead of and prompt response during the feeding window via social media as well as radio, newspaper, and direct contacts/visits.

Looking at both satellite and drone imagery, we were able to document feeding injury then begin to ground truth whether images matched fall armyworm feeding areas or were due to other factors. We hope to use this for more advanced scouting in the future to provide a better early warning system for producers/retailers.

Agriculture and Water Festivals – Natural Resources

The agriculture agents from Meadowlark District have long been involved in events related to soils, water, agriculture production and wildlife. These events have reached entire classrooms, typically from every school within the county where they are held. A very popular activity has been "Water Filters" where teams of youth build a water filtering device using five, self-selected filtering ingredients. This construction follows agent review of the water cycle, pollution sources and the challenge to preserve every drop of water. Surveys over the years have indicated that this curriculum has reinforced principles taught in the classroom and proves to be a popular, educational and interactive session.



Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPN) Seedling and Earth Day Project

In the fall of 2024, 5 participants joined the Extension Master Gardener (EMG) program based out of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPN) Fire Keeper Elder Center. After completing the training, the PBPN EMGs wanted to put their knowledge to use. The PBPN EMGs saw an opportunity to use their greenhouses to grow seedlings to giveaway to the community to promote gardening and food sovereignty work. We partnered with PBPN Planning and Environmental Protection (PEP), the Kansas Alliance for Tribal Community Health (KATCH), PBPN Food Sovereignty, and Prairie Band Ag LLC to grow as many seedlings as we could for the community.

We secured funding from the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts to support this effort, and we used the funding to pay for supplies and utilities at the greenhouse. We based our work on a survey of the community, where we asked community members what plants they wanted to see the most. Over three months, we grew over 3,000 seedlings. We purchased onion sets, asparagus roots, and seed potatoes to supplement our seedlings.

We gave the seedlings away at the PBPN Earth Day Celebration, with around 150 community members attending to receive plants. A garden workshop with informational talks was held and gave away even more seedlings to those who missed the Earth Day celebration.



K-State Dairy Day - Livestock

Meadowlark Extension District has been a long-time host to one of two locations across the state for K-State's Dairy Day. Even though the number of dairy farms continues to decline in the region, the number of cows does not. This is still a vibrant and important part of the Kansas Agricultural Economy. The Nemaha County portion of the district continues to have a strong dairy industry. Dairy was the ninth largest sector of the Nemaha County economy in 2024, representing \$28,207,000 of output. Serving as a host to the University, bringing cutting edge research to the producers is an important annual activity.

Revitalizing the Seneca EMG Program

When I first re-started the Extension Master Gardener (EMG) program in the Meadowlark District, there was only one existing EMG. In 2024 and 2025, nine new EMGs were trained. Our program now has active members that routinely attend meetings and volunteer in our office demonstration garden.

In the summer of 2025, the EMGs spent an incredible amount of time working on the garden beds around the Seneca office. They designed ideas for the beds, discussed plant selection, and shoveled an incredible amount of mulch.

On the west side of the office, the EMGs installed grape and berry trellises. One EMG donated around 50 strawberry plants that we planted in the center median of the parking lot. On the east side we planted around 200 sweet potato slips. The EMGs then sold produce at the weekly farmers market and donated sweet potatoes to food pantries and blessing boxes.

During the winter, the EMGs met again to plan out which parts of the garden they want to focus on in 2026. These EMGs all plan to continue with the program, and they are excited to grow our garden and provide horticultural information to our community.



Developing Tomorrows Leaders

District-Wide Club Leader Meeting

A district-wide club leader meeting was held in October to support our very important volunteer leaders. The evening involved sharing a meal, education, and ideas for club success. The new 4-H initiative, Beyond Ready, was presented and a round table idea swap was held.

We have a CHAMPION!

Aurora Hoffman Meadowlark District 4-H member from Jefferson County was selected as the Sewing & Textile Design Fashion Revue GRAND CHAMPION at the Public Fashion Revue at the Kansas State Fair this year.

Meadowlark Extension District

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Jefferson County

Mike McNary, Meriden
Kim Swearngin, Lawrence
Toni Reeves, Valley Falls
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