

Meadowlark Extension District Programming Report for 2024

Since 2006 our Extension District has been in alignment with K-State Research and 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.

Sincerely,

David Key

Meadowlark Extension District Director

Health

Dining with Diabetes

Dining with Diabetes is a health and wellness program that consists of four classes that focus on helping people learn strategies to lessen their risk of diabetes. Participants increased their knowledge of healthy foods, learned cooking techniques, received basic information about diabetes, and got to sample tasty recipes.

Participants improved their knowledge of food and diabetes.

"Everything makes me stop and think when I'm cooking. Good class. I learned a lot!"

"Truly enjoyed every class and learned lots of super good info! I learned about sweeteners vs sugar and that it's okay to add less sugar and salt to a recipe and get away with it. There is so much good info. Thank you for providing the class!"



A Matter of Balance

A Matter of Balance helps older adults reduce their fear of falling by learning to view falls as controllable. This program uses facilitated discussion and problem-solving to reduce and prevent falls.

A Matter of Balance sessions were held at three locations: Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation and the cities of Meriden and Valley Falls. Participants learned to reduce their fear of falling and were encouraged to check their homes for potential fall hazards. The sessions also included exercises to improve balance and self-esteem.

Arthritis Foundation - Walk with Ease

Walk with Ease is designed to help individuals with arthritis and other chronic conditions improve mobility and reduce pain. Research has shown that walking can greatly benefit people with arthritis pain by lubricating joints to improve flexibility, balance, and strength. It also helps to lubricate joints.

The participants met twice weekly for six weeks. The program provided learning sessions on arthritis and how to combat pain and stiffness through walking. It also includes strategies for staying motivated and making walking a lifetime habit.

Participants commented:

"Thanks for the time spent; it has helped a lot to keep going at age 86."

"I didn't feel like going for several days but felt better when I got home."

Walk with Ease participants gained confidence, improved joint health, and enjoyed social engagement with others.

SHICK-Senior Health Insurance for Kansas

The Meadowlark Extension District offers Medicare Counseling through the Senior Health Insurance Counseling of Kansas (SHICK) program. SHICK provides one-on-one counseling to all Medicare beneficiaries free of charge. SHICK educates beneficiaries new to Medicare during the Medicare Open Enrollment period and those needing help with other issues like appeals and special enrollment situations. One-on-one counseling is available at all three Meadowlark District offices.

In 2024, approximately 140 beneficiaries received counseling through the program. Five Medicare presentations were provided to the community; topics included Medicare 101, Understanding Medicare Advantage Plans, and Changes to Medicare in 2025. The Meadowlark District continues to save Medicare beneficiaries money during the Open Enrollment period; this year, the program saved \$36,494.38.

Since 2022 district Medicare beneficiaries utilizing our one-on-one counseling service have saved over \$121,000.00 in prescription drug costs.



WALK KANSAS

March 31 - May 25, 2024

Walk Kansas 2024

Getting the recommended amount of physical activity could prevent 1 in 10 premature deaths and individuals are missing out on the health benefits regular exercise provides, like improved sleep, reduced blood pressure and anxiety, lowered risk factors for heart disease, several cancers, and dementia.

This past year Walk Kansas ran from March 24 through May 25th. The Meadowlark Extension District hosted 20 teams; 6 solo teams and 116 individuals. Walk Kansas is a team-based, 8-week program focused on Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, which recommended a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week OR 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week, and while encouraging Walk Kansas participants to make better nutrition choices (eating more fruits/vegetables) and walking away stress.

Stay Strong, Stay Healthy Classes Popular in the Meadowlark District

Unfortunately, less than 20 percent of older adults engage in adequate physical activity, and fewer perform strength training and flexibility exercises. Stay Strong, Stay Health or (SSSH) addresses this concern by helping to improve quality of life by helping to prevent fewer falls, Improving strength, balance and flexibility.

The Meadowlark Extension District addressed this concern by offering 16 classes of weight bearing exercises for aging adults to engage in at least 60 minutes of strength training exercises at least twice a week. This program identifies the benefits of any strength training and improved knowledge of strength training. During 2024, this program was provided in Circleville, Meriden, Oskaloosa, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Seneca and Valley Falls.



Global Food Systems

Calving School was a Success

The Meadowlark Extension District hosted a regional calving school in 2024. This popular program discusses all issues related to successful calving. A life-sized cow and calf is used for demonstration and are crowd favorites.

In attendance there were 124 producers, students and allied industry members, representing 5,050 cows; 6,800 stockers; 26,000 feedlot animals. Educational presentations on cow nutrition around calving time was provided by local industry experts along with a sponsored meal.

Eighty-six percent of participants responded moderate to significant change in calving assistance knowledge with an estimated cumulative effective value to operation due to attending of \$110,100.



Invasive Bluestem Management

Old World Bluestems are a concerning new issue in our warm season grass stands across the district.

Providing information on this emerging threat while promoting efforts to combat older invasive species was the focus of the Invasive Bluestems Tailgate Talk this year.

Broomsedge management via fertility management was first on the agenda, but the primary focus of the meeting was identification and management of the Old World Bluestem species. Presentations shared management information and provided some hands-on advice.

Attendees reported valuable information was received and an increased likelihood to implement invasive species management.

Rebuilding the Cowherd

The nation's cowherd has reached low inventory levels not seen for nearly 60 years. This has led to higher cattle prices and producers questioning if now is the time to keep heifers or cash them in at these high prices. To address this topic, MED hosted a heifer development meeting in Seneca on Feb 5. A presentation overview of risk management tools and planning was held followed by a presentation on expansion and financing tips. The evening ended with a presentation on heifer development and wrapped with a hands-on heifer selection activity. Eighty-seven and a half percent of respondents reported they will likely make management changes due to attending this meeting for an estimated value of \$14,310 to \$28,200.



Northeast Kansas Sheep & Goat School

Forty-three individuals from nine different counties, attended this regionally planned and delivered event in Holton on March 13. A sheep shearing

demonstration was held followed by a presentation outlining general small ruminant management tips. A presentation on the economics of multi-species grazing was also given. Eighty-five percent of participants reported they would likely make management changes due to attendance. Ninety percent agreed with the statement of learning more about the economics of sheep & goat production. Thirty-three producers indicated an estimated financial impact to their operation due to concepts learned.



Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Elder Center Garden Project

The Meadowlark District partnered with the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPB) to train a handful of volunteers to be Master Gardeners. During their training, the trainees started talking with the Elder Center about installing a new pollinator garden. The trainees learned to sample soil for a soil testing, picked out the proper soil amendments, and got the community involved to prepare the garden bed for winter. The PBPB Lands Department tilled the garden and provided several loads of buffalo manure for the garden.



Volunteers came from Haskell University, the Elder Center, and other tribes in Kansas this fall and excitedly worked and chatted for 4 hours, spreading the manure across the 2,000 square foot garden. Since then, the PBPB Extension Master Gardeners have been working to get funding for the installation of the garden and surveying residents to determine the best ways the garden can serve their community.

Staying Ahead of Forage Insect Pressure in the District

With forage acres in decline across the District, protecting existing forage stands is vital to maintaining existing forage inventory levels. Insect pressure in two of our more important forages has made that a challenge. Scouting efforts for both pests have been implemented across the District to help producers make timely management decisions as needed to keep them at bay. For alfalfa weevil, that means regular scouting in five different fields across the District to monitor population levels. For fall armyworm, two pheromone traps have been spread out across the District to see when fall armyworm moths have arrived with hopes of being an 'early warning' system for forage growers.

Holton High School Football Field Success Story

In late 2023 the Holton High School approached Meadowlark Extension looking for ways to improve their high school football field. The field was difficult to work with and they historically had issues keeping it green and weed-free. The district invited the K-State Horticulture and Natural Resources Department to take on the project with the help of their graduate students.

Agents divided up the field into sections and sent soil tests to the KSU Soil Testing Lab. A field was facilitated for the graduate students to see the field and meet with high school staff. The students spent about 2 hours inspecting the field, testing its compaction, looking at problem areas, and talking about the field's history and maintenance schedule.

The group gave some immediate feedback and then wrote a full maintenance report with a year-round care plan. A second visit to the field was made to see how their recommendations transformed the field into a lush green turf making the project a success for all involved.

The group gave some immediate feedback and then wrote a full maintenance report with a year-round care plan. A second visit to the field was made to see how their recommendations transformed the field into a lush green turf making the project a success for all involved.



Developing Tomorrows Leaders

4-H Ambassadors Host Local Easter Egg Hunt for Community

Jackson County 4-H Ambassadors hosted their second annual Easter Egg Hunt for the Jackson County Community in 2024. 4-H families and members filled over 4,000 eggs and over 400 youth from Jackson, Jefferson, Riley and Shawnee county participated in the event held at the Northeast Kansas Heritage Complex.



4-H Families Build New Fair Barn

4-H families provided labor at a work day organized by the Jefferson County Fair Board on July 13, 2024. Volunteers embraced work and community with over 30 volunteers at this event, and they were a testament to the slogan, “learn by doing,” as they learned about carpentry skills, collaboration, and community involvement.

This project was a collaboration between Jefferson County, the Fair Board, and the 4-H community. The original barn was brought down in April, and the new barn was constructed at the beginning of July. The workday allowed the 4-H community to take an active part. Along with Fair Board volunteers, they installed the tie-off boards and pipes, toe-boards, and sign racks above the stalls. Volunteers also helped set gates and corral panels around the end of the barn. This new beef barn will serve the community and be a home for the 4-H beef exhibitors during the county fair for many years to come.



4-H Ambassadors Thank Supporters

As part of the citizenship project, the Nemaha County Ambassadors wanted to thank local businesses and fair supporters. This year 4-Hers created May Day baskets and delivered them with homemade cookies and sweet treats.



K-STATE
Research and Extension



Meadowlark
District

4-H Members Coordinate Blood Drive

Jefferson County 4-H held its first annual blood drive on July 9, 2024 at the Delaware Township Hall in Valley Falls. The drive collected 34 units of blood and was organized as a unique citizenship project for community.

When donors arrived, they had the opportunity to give on behalf of their local 4-H club. At the end of the drive, the clubs with the most donations received recognition and cash awards.

4-Hers in the Leadership and Citizenship projects volunteered by taking registrations, visiting, and stocking the recovery table during the drive. Aside from the goodness of the blood drive, this was 4-Hers giving back to their community.



4-H Ambassadors Host Day Camp

Nemaha County 4-H Ambassadors planned, led and promoted their annual youth day camp for youth in the county again this summer. They ambassadors use this event to reach out to 4-H and non-4-H youth to offer and teach summer time fun activities.



2024 Meadowlark District 4-H Quick Facts

Meadowlark District is one of the largest 4-H Units in the state of Kansas, in terms of youth enrollment number. 2024 enrollment data shows 775 4-H members, including 63 Cloverbuds (ages 5-8) enrolled in one of the 29 clubs within the District. There were 197 registered volunteers working directly with these youth. In addition to the Community 4-H Club enrollment, many youth are involved in school enrichment activities in school or after school.

Member Facts

• Male Members	368
• Female Members	405
• Rural Residence	495
• Town/City Residence	275
• Average 4-H Age	10.5

Top Five Projects by Enrollment

1. Foods and Nutrition	336
2. Beef	261
3. Photography	260
4. Visual Arts & Crafts	260
5. Swine	162

Two From District Board Recognized for Their Support

Susan Voelker - Longtime Valley Falls resident Susan Voelker was recently recognized for her support of Extension and the Meadowlark Extension District in 2024. Susan served on the Jefferson County Extension council and was a founding board member of the Meadowlark Extension District in 2007. She announced her retirement from the District board in January after serving four terms.

Susan has been a great supporter of the 4-H program in Jefferson county for many years serving and has been a dedicated volunteer to extension for nearly forty years and knows the value of extension!

Tresa Jones - Seneca resident Tresa Jones was recognized in 2024 for her support of Extension and the Meadowlark Extension District in 2024. Tresa served on the Nemaha County Extension Council and was a founding board member of the Meadowlark Extension District in 2007. She announced her retirement from the governing in the fall of 2023 after serving four terms.

Community Vitality

Regional Agritourism Conference Held

The Meadowlark Extension District helped organize and sponsor a regional Agritourism workshop on February 29 in Holton. The meeting was well attended with 65+ spending the day in Holton. Those attending got to network with and hear from Washburn SBDC, Kansas Agritourism, Land of Kansas, Kansas Farm Bureau and local representatives from Northeast Kansas Enterprise Facilitation, Glacial Hills RC&D, Meadowlark Extension and legal expertise from the White Law Office in Holton. Topics discussed were start up resources, marketing tips, risk management, advocacy, funding sources and grant funding resources.



Meadowlark District Hosts KSU Community Visit

KSU came to Jackson County for a community visit February 6th and 7th. The event was a success based on comments from those attending and from campus. The “different” thing about these visits is that they stand alone on the program or events being held. We felt lucky that our District programming was featured as part of the visit.

The two-day event started with an open community visit followed by a community discussion at the Holton Community Hospital related to day care issues and how they affect the local economy followed by a session at the Jackson County Courthouse on economic development challenges and needs that included a panel discussion.



Local Farmer's Market Given a Boost

In early 2024 the local chamber of commerce was seeking a partner to reinvigorate and support the Farmer's Market in Seneca. Our District offered the use of our meeting facility and parking lot to host the event through the summer months. Vendor participation was strong with nine consistent vendors for the season. Attendees appreciated the indoor site and solid surfaces to walk on. A geofence was established around the building during the market season to catch a traffic count. The highest attendance market day of 260 was recorded in August and the overall attendance for the weekly markets was a little over 2600.



Meadowlark Extension District
114 W 5th St.
Holton, KS 66436

Address Service Requested

Meadowlark Extension District Governing Body Members

Jackson County

Henriette Area, Mayetta

Bruce Yonke, Holton

Carolyn Kennedy, Circleville

Amy Pruyser, Hoyt

Jefferson County

Mike McNary, Meriden

Kim Swearngin, Lawrence

Toni Reeves, Valley Falls

Julie Newman, Oskaloosa

Nemaha County

Marcia Bauerle, Sabetha

Pam Deters, Baileyville

Marya Haverkamp, Bern

Jan Rottinghaus, Seneca

Meadowlark Extension District Agents and Staff

Holton Office

David Hallauer, Extension Agent
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Teresa Hatfield, Extension Agent
Family Community Wellness

Cara Robinson,
4-H Program Manager

Carol McManigal, Office Professional

Oskaloosa Office

Cindy Williams, Extension Agent
Family and Consumer Sciences

Extension Agent 4-H and Youth
Development - Vacant

Laura Phillips, Extension Agent
Horticulture

Heather Roenne,
4-H Program Manager

Michelle Pentlin, Office Professional

Seneca Office

David Key, District Director and
Extension Agent Community Vitality

Ross Mosteller, Extension Agent
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Debra Henry,
4-H Program Manager

Amy Haverkamp, Office Professional

K-STATE

Research and Extension

K-State Research and Extension
is an equal opportunity provider
and employer.

Meadowlark Extension District – Nemaha, Jackson, and Jefferson Counties

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

Seneca Office Nemaha County

1615 Branch Street
Seneca, KS 66538-1504
Phone: 785-336-2184

www.meadowlark.ksu.edu