

Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK)

Health insurance choices affect all citizens of Kansas. Every day 10,000 baby boomers become Medicare eligible—significantly increasing the need for SHICK services. Many do not understand health insurance or Medicare. Insufficient or inaccurate information can lead to late enrollment penalties, gaps in coverage, strained finances and delayed treatment for many people. For all Medicare beneficiaries, particularly those living near or below the poverty level, making sound financial decisions related to health insurance can alleviate stress. It can also free financial resources to meet other goals, improve health outcomes, and support community vitality when that money stays in the local area.

- Over 250 people attended Medicare educational programs in 2018.
- Approximately 150 people received one-on-one counseling in the office or by phone January to September, 2018.
- Faculty and volunteers assisted 859 Medicare beneficiaries during Medicare Open Enrollment, October 15-December 7, 2018.
- 5 volunteer SHICK counselors and 4 intake volunteers assist during the open enrollment period, volunteering more than 500 hours.
- 15 beneficiaries received help applying for the 'Extra Help' program to assist with prescription drug costs.
- 561 beneficiaries (68%) changed to a plan that better meets their needs for 2019, saving a total of \$619,386, or an average of \$1,104 per person.
- Between 2013 and 2018, we have served over 5,200 people for a savings of more than \$3 million.
- Beneficiaries reported an increased understanding of terms associated with health insurance, factors to consider when choosing a health or drug plan, and how the level of coverage and size of deductible affect the premium paid.

Community Vitality

What is it that extension can do? Community Vitality programs reach across all areas and agents. One program that has been offered last spring and will be again this spring, is Board Leadership, a four-session program that covers topics to help individuals be successful on community boards. Topics include: agendas, recruitment, finances, conflict management, and legalities to name a few. Other programs we have done to assist Chambers of Commerce, Community Pride Groups, economic development coordinators, community committees, and other groups are everything from equipment to facilitation of community discussions. We have worked with K-State Polytechnic on Civic Discussions and the Talk Salina Group, a group that coordinates community discussion sessions. Agents Jason, Leah, and Carl have worked with Salina Water Festival Group to educate 600 fourth graders on the importance of water and why we must protect our water to protect all life. This past year we had an informational meeting on large-scale chicken production, when Tyson was looking to locate a chicken processing plant in North Central Kansas.

Annual 4-H Officer Training & Family Event

At the beginning of the 4-H year, 192 4-H members, parents and volunteers attended the Annual 4-H Officer Training & Family Event. This was the ninth year for the restructuring of the officer training and the second year McPherson County joined us. This year First Bank Kansas sponsored a meal for the event for our participants and taught some class sessions on fiscal responsibility. In addition to the officer sessions, we had additional sessions which included: How to help your child get started with the KAP and record books; How to be a Judge (adult session); Fiscal Responsibility (adult session & two youth sessions); Crafts; Livestock Judging; How to be judged/How to conference judge; Pretty Awesome PAR-LAW Fun!; How to be a 4-H Parent; Making 4-H Club Meetings Rock!; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; Leadership Initiatives; and I didn't know that!. By attending the 4-H Officer Training & Family Event, youth became more prepared to serve in their officer role with their club. Depending on their role, they learned how to accurately keep records, serve in the leadership role they were elected to, and the importance of communication, planning, and organizing. Additionally, 4-H members, parents, and volunteers had the opportunity to expand their knowledge in the other sessions offered.





Stay Strong, Stay Healthy

Health is one of the five grand challenges identified by K-State Research and Extension and our stakeholders. Central Kansas Extension District offers a variety of programs designed to improve many facets of health. One of our most popular health-related classes has been the Stay Strong, Stay Healthy strength training course. Regular strengthening and flexibility exercises are vitally important for individuals to maintain strong, independent and mobile lives. Loss of muscle mass combined with chronic disease symptoms such as arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes, etc., can severely limit an individual's ability to perform daily tasks. To address these significant health issues, Leah Robinson, extension agent and certified Stay Strong, Stay Healthy instructor, partnered with the Ottawa County Wellness Center to provide this 10-week, 2-days-a-week course. Based on pre and post tests, participants showed measurable improvement in balance, flexibility and gaining increased strength abilities. Not only was this an effective physical health program, it also provided mental and social health benefits as well.

Horticulture Programs Connect Kids with Nature and Encourage Healthy Childhood Development.

The need to connect youth with horticulture and nature is increasing. There is a growing body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development. Today, kids are regularly becoming aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact and intimacy with nature is still fading.

Horticulture agent Jason Graves and Master Gardener volunteers focused attention on several opportunities for youth horticulture education in 2018. Activities included were: hands on learning and engagement with nature through live beneficial insect releases, 4-H horticulture projects, plant science school enrichment programs, library reading programs, and pollinator programs. Youth horticulture education programming has resulted in increased physical contact with nature for youth in the Central Kansas District. In 2018, over 500 students and youth physically interacted with nature through youth horticulture outreach programs in the Central Kansas District.



A K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener volunteer leads a green lacewing larva release with students at the Salina Public Library.

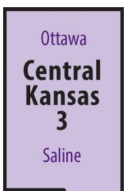
Managing around Mother Nature

Given the Kansas climate, livestock producers are often faced with a “feast or famine” situation when it comes to moisture. For ranchers in the Central Kansas Extension District (CKD), 2018 proved no different. Much of the spring and summer was spent in moderate to extreme drought only to be offset by excessive rainfall and flooding throughout the fall and early winter. The year’s variable weather across Kansas presented many challenges with forage availability, stock water supplies, and overall herd management.

Managing grazing lands in times of low rainfall can be frustrating when trying to extend limited grass production, keep stock ponds from disappearing and maintain reproductive and/or growth performance. To hopefully gain an edge, over 100 cattlemen from central Kansas attended a grazing workshop hosted by CKD to learn about more efficient grazing practices, alternative water systems, and cost-effective fencing design.

Nitrate accumulation and feed quality can be a major concern in harvested forages during periods of drought. Last year, CKD ag agents assisted stockmen with the sampling and submission of nearly 200 feedstuffs for analysis of toxins, nutrients composition and marketability. This testing facilitated more accurate ration balancing and savings on purchasing or depleting inventories of expensive feed that was already in short supply.

Once the rains did start (and didn’t stop), many fall silage, hay and grain crops were unable to be harvested. Agents fielded numerous inquiries from producers on how they could best utilize these resources in a safe and timely manner.



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